

A decorative blue floral border with intricate scrollwork and leaf patterns, framing the central text.

GUZ 28 Hosea

*Bible Commentary:
David Guzik TEV -
XXVIII*

David Guzik

David Guziks' Commentary On
28 Hosea
Biblical Text – TEV (Good News Bible)

Hos 1:1 This is the message which the LORD gave Hosea son of Beeri during the time that Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah were kings of Judah, and Jeroboam son of Jehoash was king of Israel.

Hosea's Wife and Children

Hos 1:2 When the LORD first spoke to Israel through Hosea, he said to Hosea, "Go and get married; your wife will be unfaithful, and your children will be just like her. In the same way my people have left me and become unfaithful."

Hos 1:3 So Hosea married a woman named Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim. After the birth of their first child, a son,

Hos 1:4 the LORD said to Hosea, "Name him 'Jezreel,' because it will not be long before I punish the king of Israel for the murders that his ancestor Jehu committed at Jezreel. I am going to put an end to Jehu's dynasty.

Hos 1:5 And in Jezreel Valley I will at that time destroy Israel's military power."

Hos 1:6 Gomer had a second child—this time it was a daughter. The LORD said to Hosea, "Name her 'Unloved,' because I will no longer show love to the people of Israel or forgive them.

Hos 1:7 But to the people of Judah I will show love. I, the LORD their God, will save them, but I will not do it by war—with swords or bows and arrows or with horses and horsemen."

Hos 1:8 After Gomer had weaned her daughter, she became pregnant again and had another son.

Hos 1:9 The LORD said to Hosea, "Name him 'Not-My-People,' because the people of Israel are not my people, and I am not their God."

Hos 1:10 The people of Israel will become like the sand of the sea, more than can be counted or measured. Now God says to them, "You are not my people," but the day is coming when he will say to them, "You are the children of the living God!"

Hos 1:11 The people of Judah and the people of Israel will be reunited. They will choose for themselves a single leader, and once again they will grow and prosper in their land. Yes, the day of Jezreel will be a great day!

Hosea 1:1-11

Hosea 1 - The Prophet and the Prostitute

A. The life and times of the Prophet Hosea.

1. (1a) *Hosea the man.*

The word of the LORD that came to Hosea the son of Beeri,

a. **The word of the LORD:** Plainly said, Hosea was a *prophet*. He spoke forth the **word of the LORD**, and applied that word to his life, and to the people and circumstances around him. Hosea was a man, but he was a man God used to speak through.

b. **Hosea the son of Beeri:** The name **Hosea** means "salvation." It comes from the same Hebrew root (*hoshea*) as the names *Joshua* and *Jesus*. Throughout the book, Hosea will show us that salvation is found in turning to the LORD and away from our sin.

c. **Son of Beeri:** This tells us the name of Hosea's father. We also know that he had a wife named *Gomer* (Hos 1:3), and two sons and a daughter (Hos 1:4;

Hos 1:6; Hos 1:9). Nowhere else in the Bible is Hosea mentioned.

2. (1b) *The times Hosea lived in.*

In the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.

a. **Kings of Judah... king of Israel:** Hosea's ministry spanned the years 760 to 720 B.C. during the days of the *divided monarchy*. This was after days of David and Solomon, when the people of God divided in a civil war, creating two nations: Israel in the north, and Judah in the south. This is some 250 years after the time of King David, and some 650 years after Israel came into the Promised Land.

b. **Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah:** Hosea's ministry was in the *northern* kingdom of Israel. We know this because in Hos 7:5 he calls the king of Israel *our king*, and because his ministry is focused towards the northern kingdom of Israel and its capital city Samaria. But for the benefit of his readers in the southern kingdom of Judah, Hosea gives them a reference point for the days of his ministry according to the **kings of Judah**.

c. **Jeroboam.... king of Israel:** Hosea began his ministry in the days of Jeroboam II. From a political and economic standpoint Jeroboam II was a successful and good king (2Ki 14:23-29). Israel prospered politically and materially under his reign, but it was a time of significant spiritual and moral decay. The terrible result of this decay wouldn't become evident until the days of Jeroboam II were finished.

i. A dramatic example of this is seen in the lives of the six kings that followed Jeroboam II during the time of

Hosea's ministry. Of those six kings, four were violently overthrown and one died as a conquered exile in Assyria.

Kings of Israel during the Ministry of Hosea, 760 to 720 B.C.

Dynasty of Jehu		
Jeroboam II	793-752 B.C.	Gave throne to his son
Zechariah	753-752 B.C.	Assassinated
Dynasty of Shallum		
Shallum	752 B.C. (one month)	Assassinated
Dynasty of Menahem		
Menahem	752-742 B.C.	Gave throne to his son
Pekahiah	724-740 B.C.	Overthrown in coup d'état
Dynasty of Pekah		
Pekah	752-732 B.C.	Assassinated
Dynasty of Hoshea		
Hoshea	732-722 B.C.	Died in exile

ii. Hosea began his ministry at a time when things were so politically successful and economically prosperous that people just didn't look to the Lord the way that they should. The seeds of idolatry, spiritual

failure, and moral corruption sown in days of Jeroboam II produced a tragic harvest in the following years.

iii. Significantly, Jeroboam I was the first king of a divided Israel, leading a popular revolt against the high taxation of Rehoboam, son of Solomon (1 Kings 12). Jeroboam II followed in the wicked footsteps of Jeroboam I.

B. Israel's unfaithfulness and a promise of restoration.

1. (2) *The command to take a prostitute as a wife.*

When the LORD began to speak by Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea:

**"Go, take yourself a wife of harlotry
And children of harlotry,
For the land has committed great harlotry
By departing from the LORD."**

a. **The LORD said to Hosea:** God's first word to Hosea was something for his own life. This is how God almost always works. Hosea probably would have preferred it if God gave him a word for someone else. But before the prophet can speak to the nation, he first has to hear from God for himself.

b. **Go take yourself a wife of harlotry:** The word God had for Hosea wasn't easy. Hosea was told to take a prostitute for a wife. Why? Because **the land has committed great harlotry by departing from the LORD.**

i. Through His command to Hosea, God brings to life a consistent picture used throughout the Old Testament. In this picture, the LORD is the husband of Israel, and their passionate, chronic attraction for

idols was like the lust of an adulterer. His people were as unfaithful as a prostitute was.

ii. In this vivid picture, we see how our idolatry and rejection of the LORD feels to God. When we put anything in front of the LORD, it hurts Him like unfaithfulness hurts the victim of an adulterous marriage. By commanding Hosea to **take... a wife of harlotry**, God will put Hosea in the place where he feels what God feels – and it won't feel good.

iii. "We cannot say that God grieves exactly as we grieve, if only because He controls all things and always works them out in accordance with His own good pleasure. Nevertheless, there is a parallel between God's feelings and ours." (Boice)

iv. Many commentators press the idea that Gomer was not a prostitute when Hosea first met and married her, she only *became* that later and Hosea knew from the LORD that she would become that. This may be the case, but we don't know this from the text. It could go either way.

2. (3-5) Hosea's marriage to Gomer and their first son.

So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. Then the LORD said to him:

**"Call his name Jezreel,
For in a little *while* I will avenge the bloodshed of Jezreel on the house of Jehu,
And bring an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel.
It shall come to pass in that day
That I will break the bow of Israel in the Valley of Jezreel."**

a. **So he went and took Gomer:** We can assume that Hosea would never marry a prostitute except by the commandment of the LORD. It showed a lot of obedience for him to actually carry out this difficult command.

i. As will be made clear, when Hosea married Gomer, she did not give up her career as a prostitute. It wasn't that Hosea found a fallen woman and through love and kindness restored her to virtue. He married a prostitute – no doubt hoping she would give up her sin and be devoted only to him – and she stayed a prostitute.

ii. No doubt, this happened after the pattern of human nature. When Hosea and Gomer first married, she probably promised eternal love and devotion. She probably showed every sign of being committed to Hosea. But after a while, and in difficult circumstances, she fell back into prostitution. Perhaps it was out of boredom. Perhaps it was out of a feeling of neglect. Perhaps it was out of a sense of need. Sadly, we share the same inexcusable reasons for our idolatry, when we prefer another god to the LORD God.

iii. Some commentators believe this never really happened, and that Hosea is only telling a vivid story. They think it could never have happened because God would never have a prophet marry a prostitute. But Boice rightly observes, "If Hosea's story cannot be real (because 'God could not ask a man to marry an unfaithful woman'), then neither is the story of salvation real, because that is precisely what Christ has done for us."

b. **Call his name Jezreel:** The first son born to Hosea and Gomer was "**Jezreel**" and the name spoke of two things. First, **Jezreel** means "Scattered," and Israel

would soon be scattered in exile by a conquering Assyrian army. Second, **Jezreel** refers to the Valley of Jezreel, where Jehu - the founder of the dynasty that put Jeroboam II on the throne - massacred all the descendants of Ahab, thus establishing his throne (2Ki 10:11). God directed Hosea to name his son **Jezreel** to confirm His promise to **avenge the bloodshed of Jezreel** by judging the **house of Jehu**.

i. Obviously, this was not good news to Jeroboam II. It said that his dynasty, the dynasty of Jehu, was coming to an end. In fact, after the death of Jeroboam II in 752 B.C. his son Zechariah barely reigned only six months before being assassinated (2Ki 15:8-10), and that was the end of the **house of Jehu**.

c. **And bring an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel:** Just as the house of Jehu would fall, so would the whole **kingdom** of Israel. Before the prophetic ministry of Hosea was finished, Israel was defeated, destroyed, and taken captive by the mighty Assyrian Empire (2Ki 17:20-23).

i. **Break the bow of Israel:** "The bow was a symbol of power in a day when it was the principle instrument of warfare. Thus a broken bow symbolized the loss of power." (Hubbard)

3. (6-7) *A daughter born to Hosea and Gomer.*

And she conceived again and bore a daughter. Then God said to him:

**"Call her name Lo-Ruhamah,
For I will no longer have mercy on the house of Israel,
But I will utterly take them away.
Yet I will have mercy on the house of Judah,**

**Will save them by the LORD their God,
And will not save them by bow,
Nor by sword or battle,
By horses or horsemen."**

a. **Call her name Lo-Ruhamah:** The name **Lo-Ruhamah** means "No Mercy." Every call to this child with the unfortunate name would remind Hosea and everyone else of coming judgment and exile.

b. **Yet I will have mercy on the house of Judah:** The army of Assyria that destroyed Israel also attacked Judah, but they did not conquer them. Instead, God miraculously fought on behalf of Judah against Assyria when the angel of the LORD killed 185,000 soldiers in the camp of Assyria in one night (2Ki 19:35).

i. The fact that God had *no mercy* to Israel and *had mercy* towards Judah shows two things.

- First, it is true that Judah and her kings were more faithful unto the Lord during these years, as exemplified by King Hezekiah (2Ki 18:1-8).

- Second, it does not really matter if Judah was more worthy of mercy than Israel was, because by its very nature mercy is mercy. If one *deserves* leniency, then leniency is a matter of justice, not mercy. Mercy is only shown to the *guilty*. Therefore it is within the wise and loving heart of God to show mercy to whom He will show mercy (Rom 9:15). But no one is ever *unfair* for *not* showing mercy.

4. (8-9) *A second son born to Hosea and Gomer.*

Now when she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, she conceived and bore a son. Then God said:

**"Call his name Lo-Ammi,
For you *are* not My people,
And I will not be your God.**

a. **Call his name Lo-Ammi:** The name **Lo-Ammi** means "Not My People." Every call to this unfortunately named child reminded Hosea and everyone else that the people of Israel had pushed away the Lord God, and should no longer be considered His **people**.

i. Since Gomer did not give up her prostitution, there may have been a cruel irony in the name **Lo-Ammi**. Perhaps this son really was not the son of Hosea, but of another man. Perhaps the appearance of the child made this evident. The message God had to deliver to Israel through Hosea was hard enough, but God also made Hosea have to *live* it.

b. **For you are not My people, and I will not be your God:** This was not so much of a *sentence* or a *penalty*, as it was a *simple stating of fact*. It wasn't as if the people really wanted to be the people of God, yet God would not have them. Instead, the people of Israel rejected God, and here the LORD simply recognized that fact. He would not play "let's pretend": "You pretend to be My people and I will pretend to be your God." The time for those games was over.

5. (1:10-2:1) *A promise of future restoration.*

**"Yet the number of the children of Israel
Shall be as the sand of the sea,
Which cannot be measured or numbered.
And it shall come to pass
In the place where it was said to them,
'You are not My people,'
There it shall be said to them,
'You are sons of the living God.'
Then the children of Judah and the children of Israel
Shall be gathered together,
And appoint for themselves one head;
And they shall come up out of the land,**

or great *will be* the day of Jezreel!

Say to your brethren, 'My people,' and to your sisters, 'Mercy is shown.' "

a. **Yet the number of the children of Israel:** Though God has promised judgment, the days of judgment won't last forever. After judgment, there will come a day of prosperity, increase, and blessing.

b. **Not My people... You are sons of the living God:** God would fulfill the promise of *Lo-Ammi* (Hos 1:9), but the judgment would not last forever. One day Israel will return to the LORD, and once again be called **sons of the living God**.

c. **Then the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together:** God promised a restoration so complete that the division caused by the civil war of Rehoboam and Jeroboam I – a division that stood for 170 years – would one day be erased.

i. We can say that one way this promise is fulfilled is in the church, where God brings together Israel, Judah – and even Gentiles – into one body (Eph 2:14-16).

d. **For great will be the day of Jezreel!** The first child of Hosea and Gomer was named *Jezreel* as a sign of judgment. But God promised a restoration so complete that **Jezreel** would once again be a name of greatness, not judgment.

e. **Say to your brethren, "My people," and to your sisters, "Mercy is shown":** This shows that the redemption would be complete. The child named **Jezreel** had his name redeemed, and then the next two children (*Lo-Ruhamah*, "No Mercy" and *Lo-Ammi*, "Not My People") had their name redeemed as Israel would once

again regarded as **“My People”** unto the LORD and **“Mercy is shown”** unto them. What was a sign of judgment would become evidence of redemption.

Israel's Unfaithfulness Punished

Hos 2:1 So call your fellow Israelites "God's People" and "Loved-by-the-Lord."

Hos 2:2 My children, plead with your mother—though she is no longer a wife to me, and I am no longer her husband. Plead with her to stop her adultery and prostitution.

Hos 2:3 If she does not, I will strip her as naked as she was on the day she was born. I will make her like a dry and barren land, and she will die of thirst.

Hos 2:4 (4-5) I will not show mercy to her children; they are the children of a shameless prostitute. She herself said, "I will go to my lovers—they give me food and water, wool and linen, olive oil and wine."

Hos 2:6 So I am going to fence her in with thorn bushes and build a wall to block her way.

Hos 2:7 She will run after her lovers but will not catch them. She will look for them but will not find them. Then she will say, "I am going back to my first husband—I was better off then than I am now."

Hos 2:8 She would never acknowledge that I am the one who gave her the grain, the wine, the olive oil, and all the silver and gold that she used in the worship of Baal.

Hos 2:9 So at harvest time I will take back my gifts of grain and wine, and will take away the wool and the linen I gave her for clothing.

Hos 2:10 I will strip her naked in front of her lovers, and no one will be able to save her from my power.

Hos 2:11 I will put an end to all her festivities—her annual and monthly festivals and her Sabbath celebrations—all her religious meetings.

Hos 2:12 I will destroy her grapevines and her fig trees, which she said her lovers gave her for serving them. I will turn her vineyards and orchards into a wilderness; wild animals will destroy them.

Hos 2:13 I will punish her for the times that she forgot me, when she burned incense to Baal and put on her jewelry to go chasing after her lovers. The LORD has spoken.

The Lord's Mercy on Israel

Hos 2:14 So I am going to take her into the desert again; there I will win her back with words of love.

Hos 2:15 I will give back to her the vineyards she had and make Trouble Valley a door of hope. She will respond to me there as she did when she was young, when she came from Egypt.

Hos 2:16 Then once again she will call me her husband—she will no longer call me her Baal.

Hos 2:17 I will never let her speak the name of Baal again.

Hos 2:18 At that time I will make a covenant with all the wild animals and birds, so that they will not harm my people. I will also remove all weapons of war from the land, all swords and bows, and will let my people live in peace and safety.

Hos 2:19 Israel, I will make you my wife; I will be true and faithful; I will show you constant love and mercy and make you mine forever.

Hos 2:20 I will keep my promise and make you mine, and you will acknowledge me as LORD.

Hos 2:21 (21-22) At that time I will answer the prayers of my people Israel. I will make rain fall on the earth, and the earth will produce grain and grapes and olives.

Hos 2:23 I will establish my people in the land and make them prosper. I will show love to those who were called "Unloved," and to those who were called "Not-My-People" I

will say, "You are my people," and they will answer, "You are our God."

Hosea 2:1-23

Hosea 2 - Sin, Judgment, and Restoration

A. Israel's sin.

1. (2-3) Charges against Israel.

**"Bring charges against your mother, bring charges;
For she *is* not My wife, nor *am* I her Husband!
Let her put away her harlotries from her sight,
And her adulteries from between her breasts;
Lest I strip her naked
And expose her, as in the day she was born,
And make her like a wilderness,
And set her like a dry land,
And slay her with thirst."**

a. **For she is not My wife:** God paints Israel as an adulterous wife, who is no longer worthy to be compared to a wife. This shows that *relationship* was dramatically broken.

i. Israel lewdly offered herself to other gods, in the way that a woman lewdly offers herself to lovers. This is communicated by the phrase **her adulteries from between her breasts**. "The reference to her 'breasts' may imply that she had laid bare her bosom to entice her lovers... If she did not change, she would be stripped naked" (Hubbard).

b. **Lest I strip her naked and expose her... and make her like a wilderness:** God warns Israel that if she would not put away her harlot-like ways, she would be judged. Though *relationship* was broken, *blessing* continued – but would be taken away if Israel did not turn.

2. (4-5) *Israel tries to justify her harlotry.*

**"I will not have mercy on her children,
For they *are* the children of harlotry.
For their mother has played the harlot;
She who conceived them has behaved shamefully.
For she said, 'I will go after my lovers,
Who give *me* my bread and my water,
My wool and my linen, my oil and my drink.'"**

a. **I will not have mercy on her children:** If Israel as a whole is represented as an unfaithful wife, then her children represent the individual people of Israel. If they do not turn back to the LORD, they will personally experience His judgment.

b. **I will go after my lovers, who give me my bread and my water, my wool and my linen:** Israel justified her harlotry because she received things from her "**lovers.**" She looked at all the good she seemed to get from her sin, and it seemed like a good deal. Israel didn't understand the *passing pleasures of sin* (Heb 11:25).

B. God's judgment.

1. (6-8) *How God will draw Israel back.*

**"Therefore, behold,
I will hedge up your way with thorns,
And wall her in,
So that she cannot find her paths.
She will chase her lovers,
But not overtake them;
Yes, she will seek them, but not find *them*.
Then she will say,
'I will go and return to my first husband,
For then *it was* better for me than now.'
For she did not know
That I gave her grain, new wine, and oil,**

**And multiplied her silver and gold;
Which they prepared for Baal."**

a. **I will hedge up your way with thorns:** To bring Israel to repentance, God promised to set a hedge of thorns on the sides of her path, so that it would hurt whenever Israel went off the correct path, and so the wrong paths would be hard to find.

i. When God hedges our **way with thorns**, we usually don't like it. We sometimes think God is against us when the thorns hurt and we can't find the wrong paths. But it is really one of the sweetest expressions of God's love to **hedge up your way with thorns** and to **wall us in**.

b. **I will go and return to my first husband:** When the passing pleasures of sin are finished, we often then see how good it was to follow the LORD. In a marriage sometimes the grass can seem greener even with the best spouse; in our walk with the LORD our idols seem attractive until God exposes them. Then we are ready to **return to our first husband**, the LORD.

c. **For she did not know that I gave her grain:** Even when Israel went after other gods, the Lord still provided for her. This showed His great, unselfish love to Israel. Even though Israel took what God provided and **prepared it for Baal**, He still loved them.

i. When Hosea provided for Gomer, she spent it on her adulterous lovers. It's as if Hosea went to the house of Gomer's lover, where she lived apart from her husband and in adultery. He knew that this scoundrel of a man couldn't provide for Gomer, and that she lived in poverty and rags. Hosea knocked at the door. He spoke to the man who answered, "Are you the man living with Gomer?" The man wondered what business it was of Hosea's; then he revealed:

"I'm Hosea, her husband. I've brought these groceries and money so she can be provided for." When Hosea left, Gomer and her lover must have thought he was a fool. What a great dinner they had together with the food Hosea brought! But this is how the LORD loves us, lavishing blessing on us even when we are worshipping idols, providing us with blessings we waste on other gods.

d. **Which they prepared for Baal:** This principle shows how offensive idolatry really is to God. Whatever we give to an idol, we have received from God.

i. God gives to man the trees of the forest and the iron in the ground. He gives man the brains to make an axe and nails from the iron, and the energy to cut down the tree, the skill to fashion the wood into beams. God gives man the cleverness to make a handle from the wood, and head from the iron, and combine it into an effective hammer. Then man takes the beams, the nails, and the hammer and he nails God to the cross – where God *willingly stretched out His arms*, dying on the cross to take the guilt and penalty man's sin deserved - and to make a new, restored relationship between God and man possible.

2. (9-13) *How God will punish Israel.*

"Therefore I will return and take away

My grain in its time

And My new wine in its season,

And will take back My wool and My linen,

***Given* to cover her nakedness.**

Now I will uncover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers,

And no one shall deliver her from My hand.

I will also cause all her mirth to cease,

Her feast days,

**Her New Moons,
Her Sabbaths;
All her appointed feasts.
And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees,
Of which she has said,
'These *are* my wages that my lovers have given me.'
So I will make them a forest,
And the beasts of the field shall eat them.
I will punish her
For the days of the Baals to which she burned
incense.
She decked herself with her earrings and jewelry,
And went after her lovers;
But Me she forgot," says the LORD.**

a. **I will return and take away My grain:** God gave grain to Israel, and she gave what He provided in sacrifices to Baal. So God would take away this provision, and as Israel felt her need and deprivation – perhaps she would then turn back to the LORD.

b. **But Me she forgot:** Israel enjoyed great prosperity during the time of Jeroboam II. But she used her prosperity for idolatry and the pursuit of ungodly pleasures, so God would take away her prosperity.

C. The restoration of Israel.

1. (14-15) Abundance and joy restored.

**"Therefore, behold, I will allure her,
Will bring her into the wilderness,
And speak comfort to her.
I will give her her vineyards from there,
And the Valley of Achor as a door of hope;
She shall sing there,
As in the days of her youth,
As in the day when she came up from the land of
Egypt."**

a. **I will allure her... speak comfort to her:** Once Israel has felt the discomfort of her deprivation, then she will listen to the voice of God once again, and He will **allure** her back to Himself.

i. Spurgeon on **I will allure her:** "This is a singular kind of power: 'I will allure her;' not, 'I will drive her' not even, 'I will draw her,' or, 'I will drag her;' or, 'I will force her.' No, 'I will allure her.' It is a very remarkable word, and it teaches us that *the allurements of love surpasses in power all other forces*. That is how the devil ruins us; he tempts us with honeyed words, sweet utterances, with the baits of pleasure and the like; and the Lord in mercy determines that, in all truthfulness, he will outbid the devil, and he will win us to himself by fascinations, enticements, and allurements which shall be stronger than any force of resistance we may offer. This is a wonderfully precious word: 'I will *allure* her.'"

b. **The Valley of Achor as a door of hope:** **Achor** means, "trouble" so the **Valley of Achor** is the "Valley of Trouble." It was a place of trouble, where Achan's sin was discovered and judged (Jos 7:26). God's restoration is so great that He will transform the "Valley of Trouble" into **a door of hope**.

c. **She shall sing there, as in the days of her youth:** When Israel is restored, she will be restored to joy. The passing pleasures of sin are forgotten and the true pleasures of God are restored.

2. (16-20) *Relationship restored.*

"And it shall be, in that day,"

Says the LORD,

"That you will call Me 'My Husband,'

And no longer call Me 'My Master,'

For I will take from her mouth the names of the Baals,

And they shall be remembered by their name no more.

In that day I will make a covenant for them

With the beasts of the field,

With the birds of the air,

And *with* the creeping things of the ground.

Bow and sword of battle I will shatter from the earth,

To make them lie down safely.

I will betroth you to Me forever;

Yes, I will betroth you to Me

In righteousness and justice,

In lovingkindness and mercy;

I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness,

And you shall know the LORD.

a. **You will call Me “My Husband”:** With great anticipation, God looked forward to the day when relationship would be genuinely restored with His people. *He wanted* an intimate love-relationship with His people, and longed for the day when His people would have a marriage-like love and commitment to their God.

b. **And not longer call Me “My Master”:** God was not satisfied with a fear-based, obedience-focused relationship with His people where they thought of Him primarily as **Master**. He wanted a relationship where they thought of Him primarily as **Husband**.

c. **I will take from her mouth the names of the Baals:** In Hebrew, the name “Baal” comes from the word “**Master**” and the two words sound alike. It was the **Baals**, the idols of the nations, which wanted this “master-slave” relationship with man. But not the LORD God; He wants a love-based, commitment-based relationship with His people.

d. **Bow and sword of battle I will shatter from the earth:** Ultimately, this blessing of restored relationship

will result in a transformed earth, changed both ecologically (

beasts of the field... birds of the air) and politically. This blessing will be fulfilled in the millennial earth, but we can come to know the transforming power of restored relationship right now.

e. **I will betroth you to Me forever:** When relationship with the LORD is ultimately restored, it will never be broken again. Relationship will be restored on a solid foundation (**In righteousness and justice, in lovingkindness and mercy**), and will result in deeper and deeper relationship (**you shall know the LORD**).

3. (21-23) *Blessing restored.*

**"It shall come to pass in that day
That I will answer," says the LORD;
"I will answer the heavens,
And they shall answer the earth.
The earth shall answer
With grain,
With new wine,
And with oil;
They shall answer Jezreel.
Then I will sow her for Myself in the earth,
And I will have mercy on *her who had not obtained*
mercy;
Then I will say to *those who were not My people*,
'You are My people!'
And they shall say, 'You are my God!' "**

a. **I will answer:** This is great blessing of real, vibrant relationship with God. Our hearts beat in rhythm to His, and so we want what He wants. So when we ask God to do things, we already ask what He wants to do – so He **will answer**.

i. This is the same principle Jesus taught: *If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you (Joh 15:7).*

b. **The earth shall answer with grain, with new wine, and with oil:** When relationship is where it is supposed to be, God abundantly provides. This is the same principle Jesus taught in Mat 6:33 : *But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*

c. **They shall answer Jezreel:** The name "**Jezreel**" means "Scattered," and could be used in a negative sense (as in Hos 1:4-5). But it was also the word used to describe the good scattering of seed, "Sowing." Here, the LORD promised a glorious redemption of the name **Jezreel**, which was first given as a sober reminder of scattering in judgment. It would become a prophecy of the promise, "**I will sow her for Myself in the earth.**" God would restore His people to abundance and blessing. Scattering would be transformed into sowing.

d. **And I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy:** Hosea's second child, a daughter, was named *Lo-Ruhamah*, meaning "No Mercy" (Hos 1:6). That name, originally given as a marker of judgment would be transformed into a mark of restoration.

e. **Then I will say to those who were not My people, "You are My people!"** Hosea's third child, a son, was named *Lo-Ammi*, meaning "Not My People" (Hos 1:9). That name, originally given as a marker of judgment, is now transformed into a mark of restoration.

f. **And they shall say, "You are my God!"** With this, the restoration would be complete. The LORD would relate to His people as their God, and His people would relate to Him as His people. This is *relationship*, full of warmth and love, and what God longs for.

i. Think about it: Which one of the pagan gods of the nations ever wanted the *love* of their followers? Which of them ever asked, "Do you love me?" False gods don't want our *love*, they want our fear, our obedience, our slave-like sacrifice and devotion. But the true God, the living God, isn't satisfied with just our fear, our obedience, or even with our slave-like sacrifice and devotion. *He wants our love, freely given and enjoyed in relationship with Him.* If we miss this, we miss the heart of God's work in us and for us.

ii. We see *complete* restoration. All three of Hosea's children, named as marks of judgment, now have their names restored and made into marks of mercy, grace, and restoration. God is that good!

Hosea Redeems His Wife

Hos 3:1 The LORD said to me, "Go again and show your love for a woman who is committing adultery with a lover. You must love her just as I still love the people of Israel, even though they turn to other gods and like to take offerings of raisins to idols."

Hos 3:2 So I paid fifteen pieces of silver and seven bushels of barley to buy her.

Hos 3:3 I told her that for a long time she would have to wait for me without being a prostitute or committing adultery; and during this time I would wait for her.

Hos 3:4 In just this way the people of Israel will have to live for a long time without kings or leaders, without sacrifices or sacred stone pillars, without idols or images to use for divination.

Hos 3:5 But the time will come when the people of Israel will once again turn to the LORD their God and to a descendant of David their king. Then they will fear the LORD and will receive his good gifts.

Hosea 3:1-5

Hosea 3 - The Restoration of an Adulterous Wife

A. The restoration of Gomer.

1. (1) *God commands Hosea to love Gomer again.*

Then the LORD said to me, "Go again, love a woman *who is* loved by a lover and is committing adultery, just like the love of the LORD for the children of Israel, who look to other gods and love *the* raisin cakes of the pagans."

a. **Go again, love a woman who is loved by a lover and is committing adultery:** God directed Hosea to go back to his wife, even though she was **committing adultery**. It wasn't in the past; it was in the present; yet he was commanded to go back to her and to **love** her.

i. This shows us that though Deu 24:1 and Mat 19:7-8 *permit* divorce when adultery breaks the marriage union, it by no means *commands* divorce. If God *commanded* divorce in the case of adultery, the He would go against His own command here.

ii. This also shows us an important principle about love: Hosea is *directed to love, even when it must have been hard to love*. We are filled with many romantic illusions about love, and one of these illusions is that love has very little to do with our *will* – we are just "captured" by love and follow whatever course it leads. But in principle, the Scriptures show us another way: That love is largely a matter of the *will*, and when we direct ourselves to love someone God tells us we must love, it can and will happen. This is why "We're not in love anymore" isn't valid grounds for a bad relationship or divorce. It assumes that love is something beyond or outside of our will.

b. Just like the love of the LORD for the children of Israel: Why did God command Hosea to go back to his still-unfaithful wife? Not only for the sake of Hosea and his wife Gomer, but also so that they would become a living lesson of the LORD's relationship with His people. They were still steeped in spiritual adultery, yet the LORD still loved them.

i. When we think of the greatness of God's love and compassion towards us, it should make us much more loving, compassionate, and forgiving towards others.

2. (2-3) Hosea demonstrates his love to Gomer and restores her through purchase.

So I bought her for myself for fifteen *shekels* of silver, and one and one-half homers of barley. And I said to her, "You shall stay with me many days; you shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man; so, too, will I be toward you."

a. **So I bought her for myself:** Hosea didn't really need to "buy" His own wife, to hire her as a prostitute. She was his wife! But as a display of love and commitment, he went the "extra mile," beyond what was expected or even reasonable.

i. In providing this way for his own wife, Hosea also showed her: "I can give you what the others can. You don't need them. Let me show you how I can provide for your needs."

ii. Boice takes **bought her for myself** to mean that Gomer was sold as a slave and Hosea bought her out of her slavery. This is possible, but not necessary. It seems more natural to regard the payment as "buying her out of prostitution."

b. You shall stay with me many days: The point of paying Gomer wasn't just to get her to give up her trade

as a prostitute. It was to bring her into relationship with Hosea, her husband. Relationship and living together was the goal.

B. The restoration of Israel.

1. (4) The fallen state of Israel.

For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, without ephod or teraphim.

a. **Without king or prince:** In her fallen state, Israel will not have the national or political leadership she needs.

b. **Without sacrifice or sacred pillar:** In her fallen state, Israel will not have the spiritual service she needs.

c. **Without ephod or teraphim:** In her fallen state, Israel will not have the supernatural guidance and direction she needs.

2. (5) The restored state of Israel.

Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They shall fear the LORD and His goodness in the latter days.

a. **The children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God:** In this time of political and spiritual ruin, Israel will **return and seek the LORD** again. This will mark their restoration – and there will be no restoration until they turn back to the LORD.

b. **And David their king... in the latter days:** This shows that this prophecy will be *ultimately* fulfilled in the millennial kingdom, where David will reign over Israel (Isa 55:3-5, Jer 30:9, Eze 34:23-25). But any individual *right now* can enjoy this blessing of restored relationship if they will turn back to the LORD.

The Lord Accuses Israel

Hos 4:1 The LORD has an accusation to bring against the people who live in this land. Listen, Israel, to what he says: "There is no faithfulness or love in the land, and the people do not acknowledge me as God.

Hos 4:2 They make promises and break them; they lie, murder, steal, and commit adultery. Crimes increase, and there is one murder after another.

Hos 4:3 And so the land will dry up, and everything that lives on it will die. All the animals and birds, and even the fish, will die."

Hos 4:4 The LORD says, "Let no one accuse the people or reprimand them—my complaint is against you priests.

Hos 4:5 Night and day you blunder on, and the prophets do no better than you. I am going to destroy Israel, your mother.

Hos 4:6 My people are doomed because they do not acknowledge me. You priests have refused to acknowledge me and have rejected my teaching, and so I reject you and will not acknowledge your sons as my priests.

Hos 4:7 "The more of you priests there are, the more you sin against me, and so I will turn your honor into disgrace.

Hos 4:8 You grow rich from the sins of my people, and so you want them to sin more and more.

Hos 4:9 You will suffer the same punishment as the people! I will punish you and make you pay for the evil you do.

Hos 4:10 You will eat your share of the sacrifices, but still be hungry. You will worship the fertility gods, but still have no children, because you have turned away from me to follow other gods."

Hos 4:11 The LORD says, "Wine, both old and new, is robbing my people of their senses!

Hos 4:12 They ask for revelations from a piece of wood! A stick tells them what they want to know! They have left me. Like a woman who becomes a prostitute, they have given themselves to other gods.

Hos 4:13 At sacred places on the mountaintops they offer sacrifices, and on the hills they burn incense under tall, spreading trees, because the shade is so pleasant! "As a result, your daughters serve as prostitutes, and your daughters-in-law commit adultery.

Hos 4:14 Yet I will not punish them for this, because you yourselves go off with temple prostitutes, and together with them you offer pagan sacrifices. As the proverb says, 'A people without sense will be ruined.'

Hos 4:15 "Even though you people of Israel are unfaithful to me, may Judah not be guilty of the same thing. Don't worship at Gilgal or Bethaven, or make promises there in the name of the living LORD.

Hos 4:16 The people of Israel are as stubborn as mules. How can I feed them like lambs in a meadow?

Hos 4:17 The people of Israel are under the spell of idols. Let them go their own way.

Hos 4:18 After drinking much wine, they delight in their prostitution, preferring disgrace to honor.

Hos 4:19 They will be carried away as by the wind, and they will be ashamed of their pagan sacrifices.

Hosea 4:1-19

Hosea 4 - Israel's Sin and God's Remedy

A. The charge against Israel.

1. (1-3) A statement of the charge: Israel's sin and God's remedy.

**Hear the word of the LORD,
You children of Israel,**

For the LORD *brings* a charge against the inhabitants of the land:

“There is no truth or mercy

Or knowledge of God in the land.

***By* swearing and lying,**

Killing and stealing and committing adultery,

They break all restraint,

With bloodshed upon bloodshed.

Therefore the land will mourn;

And everyone who dwells there will waste away

With the beasts of the field

And the birds of the air;

Even the fish of the sea will be taken away.”

a. **The LORD brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land:** As if Yahweh brought Israel into a court of law, God here described the charges against disobedient Israel.

i. Adam Clarke on **brings a charge**: “What we should call a *lawsuit*, in which God is *plaintiff*, and the Israelites *defendants*. It is Jehovah *versus* Israel and Judah.”

b. **There is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land:** Each of these three points is connected. When people forsake the **knowledge of God**, soon **truth** and **mercy** are both gone. **Truth** must be rooted in something more than personal opinion, and **mercy** means going beyond self-interest.

i. True wisdom and understanding always begin with the knowledge of God. Pro 9:10 says, *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*

ii. **Or knowledge of God in the land:** Alexander Pope, a famous writer, once wrote: “Know then thyself, presume not God to scan; the proper study of

mankind is man.” But an even more famous writer, Charles Spurgeon, responded to Pope’s statement: “It has been said by someone that ‘the proper study of mankind is man.’ I will not oppose the idea, but I believe it is equally true that the proper study of God’s elect is God; the proper study of a Christian is the Godhead. The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy which can ever engage the attention of a child of God, is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings, and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father.”

c. **They break all restraint:** It all connects back to leaving **the knowledge of God**. Soon, **truth** and **mercy** are things of the past, and people no longer practice **restraint**. When man will not or cannot restrain himself, **bloodshed** and destruction follow.

i. Our modern age is completely set against the idea of **restraint**. You see it in advertising slogans of the recent past:

- “To know no boundaries.”
- “No rules, just right.”
- “Just do it.”
- “Break all the rules.”
- “Peel off inhibitions. Find your own road.”
- “Living without boundaries.”

ii. The message is the same: You make your own rules. You answer to no one. You are the one that matters. Your universe revolves around you. You should only restrain yourself if you want to.

iii. The ultimate result is **bloodshed after bloodshed**. In the ancient Hebrew, this is literally “bloody deed touches bloody deed.” “Apparently

violent crimes had become so common that one seemed immediately to follow another, as if touching it." (Wood)

d. **Everyone who dwells there will waste away:** This is the tragic fruit of forsaking the knowledge of God, truth, mercy, and restraint. Satan sings sweetly to us, making us think or hope that casting these things away is a doorway to freedom – but it is only a path to destruction.

i. "Paul probably had Hosea's chapter in mind as he penned his own indictment of the gentile nations (cf. Hos 4:6 with Rom 1:24; Rom 1:26; Rom 1:28; Hos 4:7 with Rom 1:23; Hos 4:11 with Rom 1:21-22)." (Boice)

2. (4-8) *The corrupt and ineffective leadership of the priests.*

**"Now let no man contend, or rebuke another;
For your people *are* like those who contend with the priest.**

**Therefore you shall stumble in the day;
The prophet also shall stumble with you in the night;
And I will destroy your mother.**

**My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.
Because you have rejected knowledge,
I also will reject you from being priest for Me;
Because you have forgotten the law of your God,
I also will forget your children.**

**The more they increased,
The more they sinned against Me;
I will change their glory into shame.
They eat up the sin of My people;
They set their heart on their iniquity."**

a. **Your people are like those who contend with the priest:** In passages like Deu 17:9-12, God clearly

commanded His people to listen to and submit to the priests, who would lead and help the people with the Word of God. But because the people cast off the knowledge of God, truth, mercy, and restraint, they wouldn't listen to the priests, and they contended with them instead.

i. This helps to explain the opening of the verse: **Now let no man contend, or rebuke another.** The idea is "They won't listen to the priest, but they **contend** with him instead. So don't waste your time trying to **contend** or **rebuke** them yourself."

b. **Therefore you shall stumble in the day:** It's bad enough to stumble in the night, but at least we can understand it. But when God's people cast off the knowledge of God, restraint, and guidance from leaders then they shall **stumble** even **in the day**.

c. **The prophet also shall stumble with you in the night:** God paints a picture so bleak that even the **prophet** is dragged down to the level of the people and stumbles. Perhaps the prophet thought he was safe or immune because of his spiritual standing or reputation, but he is not. **The prophet also shall stumble with you.**

d. **My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge:** When God's people are **destroyed** and waste away, it isn't because God has lost either His love or strength. It's because His people **lack... knowledge**.

i. It isn't that God says His people are completely ignorant. They have *some* **knowledge**, but not enough. They may have just enough to make them think they know it all.

ii. What kind of **knowledge** did they **lack**? In the context, the first answer must be they lack *the*

knowledge of God (Hos 4:1). They know God some – perhaps a little – but not *enough*. Perhaps they felt they knew God well enough already.

iii. The second kind of **knowledge** they **lack** is the knowledge of God's Word (**you have forgotten the law of your God**). They know the Word of God some – perhaps a little – but not *enough*. Perhaps they felt they knew God's Word well enough already.

iv. It should not surprise us that there is a connection between knowing God and knowing His Word. Some people think that Bible knowledge is boring and brainy and not necessary for a real walk with God. But God and His Word are vitally connected. Psa 138:2 says, *You have magnified Your word above all Your name*. When God sought for a term to express His nature, He calls Himself "The Word" (Joh 1:1).

v. When we know God for who He really is, it affects our conduct. "Where there is *no knowledge of God*, no conviction of his *omnipresence* and *omniscience*, private offences, such as stealing, adulteries, and so forth, will prevail." (Clarke)

e. **Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me:** Here we see who is responsible for the **lack of knowledge** among the people of God – the priests who **rejected knowledge**, the knowledge of God and His Word.

i. Teaching was an important duty of the priests (Deu 33:10, Eze 44:23, Mal 2:7). Their neglect of this demonstrates what an important place the minister, the pastor, the preacher has in presenting God and His Word to the people. If he neglects his duty to *preach the word* (2Ti 4:2), then he can't lead the people into the true knowledge of God, and will lead them into destruction.

ii. **I will also forget your children:** God will hold the unfaithful minister, pastor, or preacher accountable. They have much to answer for before God.

iii. **Priest for Me** reminds us that the priest didn't only serve on behalf of the people, but also on behalf of the LORD. The priest represented the people to God, but also represented – through the preaching of the word – God to the people.

f. **The more they increased, the more they sinned against Me; I will change their glory into shame:** God blessed the priests with *increase*, but they took God's blessing for granted and only **sinned against** God all the more. Blessing is a two-edged gift; it is obviously wonderful to be blessed, but it also brings more accountability and more opportunity for sin.

i. **They eat up the sin of My people:** "They did this by enjoying the benefits of the people's sins, such as taking bribes and eating the sin offerings. So the priests actually relished Israel's wickedness" (Wood).

3. (9-10) *Judgment is promised.*

**"And it shall be: like people, like priest.
So I will punish them for their ways,
And reward them for their deeds.
For they shall eat, but not have enough;
They shall commit harlotry, but not increase;
Because they have ceased obeying the LORD."**

a. **Like people, like priest:** The priests may have thought they would be immune from the judgment coming upon Israel. After all, they were priests! But God promises that when it comes to judgment, **like people, like priest.**

i. There is no doubt that the priesthood of Israel was corrupt. "Jeroboam I had made priests 'from all sorts of people' (1Ki 12:31; 1Ki 13:33). Therefore, large numbers of true priests - and doubtless true prophets, also - had left the northern kingdom (2Ch 11:13-16)" (Wood).

ii. There is also another way to understand the phrase "**like people, like priest.**" It also means that *as the people go*, so go the priests. Sometimes people expect their religious leaders to be holy *for them* or *instead of them*. But since the "priests" come from the people, if the people are backslidden then many backslidden men will seek to be "priests."

b. **They shall eat, but not have enough:** One aspect of the judgment God promises is that Israel will not be blessed with increase. They will have, but it will never seem to be **enough**, and they will never be satisfied.

4. (11-14) *The adultery of idolatry.*

**"Harlotry, wine, and new wine enslave the heart.
My people ask counsel from their wooden *idols*,
And their staff informs them
For the spirit of harlotry has caused *them* to stray,
And they have played the harlot against their God.
They offer sacrifices on the mountaintops,
And burn incense on the hills,
Under oaks, poplars, and terebinths,
Because their shade *is* good.
Therefore your daughters commit harlotry,
And your brides commit adultery.
I will not punish your daughters when they commit harlotry,
Nor your brides when they commit adultery;
For *the men* themselves go apart with harlots,
And offer sacrifices with a ritual harlot.**

Therefore people *who* do not understand will be trampled."

a. The spirit of harlotry has caused them to stray:

Israel's idolatry was like adultery against the LORD. Every sacrifice made to a pagan god was like an act of adultery.

i. The picture is striking when we consider *what a faithful and good husband the LORD is to His people*. Adultery is never excusable, but is even more heinous against a good, faithful, loving spouse.

ii. The picture is striking when we consider *how Israel wanted to add pagan gods to their worship of the LORD*. It isn't as if Israel officially said, "We want to leave the LORD, and now serve only pagan gods." Instead, Israel wanted to *add* the worship of pagan gods to their worship of the LORD. God received this the same way a husband would if his wife said, "I want you to still be my husband, I just want to take on a few more lovers also."

b. For the men themselves go apart with harlots, and offer sacrifices with a ritual harlot: Describing idolatry as spiritual adultery is especially appropriate when we understand that many pagan gods were "worshipped" by the hiring of a **ritual harlot**. This was far more enticing than just praying to a statue.

i. **I will not punish your daughters:** Because the men of Israel sinned this way, God would not single the women of Israel out for judgment when it came to this sin. God doesn't have a double standard for sexual conduct between men and women.

c. Therefore people who do not understand will be trampled: The idea of Hos 4:6 is repeated (*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge*). Without

understanding God and His word, God's people are destined for destruction.

B. A warning to Judah.

1. (15) *Judah is warned not to follow Israel's sinful ways.*

**"Though you, Israel, play the harlot,
let not Judah offend.**

Do not come up to Gilgal,

Nor go up to Beth Aven,

Nor swear an oath, saying, 'As the LORD lives'—

a. **Let not Judah offend:** At this time, God's people were divided into two nations - Israel to the north, and Judah to the south. Israel's apostasy was far more ingrained, so Judah is cautioned that they must not follow her neighbor's sinful ways.

b. **Do not come up to Gilgal:** The cities of **Gilgal** and **Beth Aven** were centers of idolatry in Israel. For a citizen of Judah to travel there meant they shared in Israel's idolatry. When we get too close to sinful practices, they often rub off on us: *Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."* (1Co 15:33)

i. At one time, **Gilgal** was a place where prophets were trained under Elijah and Elisha (2Ki 2:1; 2Ki 4:38). But in Hosea's day it had become a center of false worship (Hos 9:15; Hos 12:11; Amo 4:4; Amo 5:5).

ii. There is no city actually named **Beth Aven**. Hosea is twisting the name of the city of *Bethel* - meaning "House of God" - into the more fitting name **Beth Aven**, meaning "House of Deceit." Bethel was the southern center of calf worship established by Jeroboam I (1Ki 12:28-29).

2. (16-19) *A summary of the charge: Israel's sin and God's remedy.*

**"For Israel is stubborn
Like a stubborn calf;
Now the LORD will let them forage
Like a lamb in open country.
Ephraim *is* joined to idols,
Let him alone.
Their drink is rebellion,
They commit harlotry continually.
Her rulers dearly love dishonor.
The wind has wrapped her up in its wings,
And they shall be ashamed because of their
sacrifices."**

a. **Israel is stubborn like a stubborn calf:** Cattle can safely feed out on the open range, because they are not easy prey for predators. But **a lamb in open country** has strayed from the shepherd and is vulnerable. Hosea's point is plain: if you act like a stubborn cow, don't expect to be protected like an obedient sheep.

b. **Ephraim is joined to idols:** The tribe of "**Ephraim**" was the largest tribe in Israel. Therefore, the prophets often referred to Israel as "**Ephraim**."

c. **Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone:** This is one way to express the judgment that is coming against Israel. God will simply leave Ephraim **alone**. When the mighty Assyrian army comes against them, they may fight for themselves - God will **let him alone**.

i. We don't want God to leave us **alone** because we need Him to protect us against our spiritual enemies. Satan wanted to sift Peter like wheat, but Jesus did not leave Peter alone to face the attack. Jesus prayed for Peter, and he emerged victorious (Luk 22:31-32).

ii. We don't want God to leave us **alone** because we need Him to protect us against ourselves. Left to ourselves, with our own sinful hearts, we will surely

drift away from the LORD. All God must do to make certain a man goes to hell is simply **let him alone**. Our prayer should always be, "LORD, don't leave me alone. Keep working on me."

Punishment Coming for Israel and Judah

Hos 5:1 "Listen to this, you priests! Pay attention, people of Israel! Listen, you that belong to the royal family! You are supposed to judge with justice—so judgment will fall on you! You have become a trap at Mizpah, a net spread on Mount Tabor,

Hos 5:2 a deep pit at Acacia City, and I will punish all of you.

Hos 5:3 I know what Israel is like—she cannot hide from me. She has been unfaithful, and her people are unfit to worship me."

Hos 5:4 The evil that the people have done keeps them from returning to their God. Idolatry has a powerful hold on them, and they do not acknowledge the LORD.

Hos 5:5 The arrogance of the people of Israel cries out against them. Their sins make them stumble and fall, and the people of Judah fall with them.

Hos 5:6 They take their sheep and cattle to offer as sacrifices to the LORD, but it does them no good. They cannot find him, for he has left them.

Hos 5:7 They have been unfaithful to the LORD; their children do not belong to him. So now they and their lands will soon be destroyed.

Hos 5:8 Blow the war trumpets in Gibeah! Sound the alarm in Ramah! Raise the war cry at Bethaven! Into battle, men of Benjamin!

Hos 5:9 The day of punishment is coming, and Israel will be ruined. People of Israel, this will surely happen!

Hos 5:10 The LORD says, "I am angry because the leaders of Judah have invaded Israel and stolen land from her. So I will pour out punishment on them like a flood.

Hos 5:11 Israel is suffering oppression; she has lost land that was rightfully hers, because she insisted on going for help to those who had none to give.

Hos 5:12 I will bring destruction on Israel and ruin on the people of Judah.

Hos 5:13 "When Israel saw how sick she was and when Judah saw her own wounds, then Israel went to Assyria to ask the great emperor for help, but he could not cure them or heal their wounds.

Hos 5:14 I will attack the people of Israel and Judah like a lion. I myself will tear them to pieces and then leave them. When I drag them off, no one will be able to save them.

Hos 5:15 "I will abandon my people until they have suffered enough for their sins and come looking for me. Perhaps in their suffering they will try to find me."

Hosea 5:1-15

Hosea 5 - The Folly of Trusting in Man's Deliverance

A. Israel's sinful idolatry.

1. (1-3) Israel's leaders are rebuked for the sinful state of the nation.

"Hear this, O priests!

Take heed, O house of Israel!

Give ear, O house of the king!

For yours *is* the judgment,

Because you have been a snare to Mizpah

And a net spread on Tabor.

The revolvers are deeply involved in slaughter,

Though I rebuke them all.

I know Ephraim,

**And Israel is not hidden from Me;
For now, O Ephraim, you commit harlotry;
Israel is defiled."**

a. **Hear this, O priests:** When God saw the sinful state of the nation of Israel, He saw that it was because the leaders did not lead in a godly way. It would be tempting for the priests to blame the people, but it was really the fault of the spiritual leadership (**priests**) and political leadership (**house of Israel**) of the nation.

b. **The revolvers are deeply involved in slaughter, though rebuke I them all:** The real tragedy of Israel's sin wasn't so much that they stumbled. It was more so that they did not respond to God's **rebuke** when they did stumble. If a man knows how to humbly respond to God's correction, God can always work with him.

2. (4-9) Israel's double desolation.

**"They do not direct their deeds
Toward turning to their God,
For the spirit of harlotry is in their midst,
And they do not know the LORD.
The pride of Israel testifies to his face;
Therefore Israel and Ephraim stumble in their iniquity;
Judah also stumbles with them.
With their flocks and herds
They shall go to seek the LORD,
But they will not find *Him*;
He has withdrawn Himself from them.
They have dealt treacherously with the LORD,
For they have begotten pagan children.
Now a New Moon shall devour them and their heritage.
Blow the ram's horn in Gibeah,
The trumpet in Ramah!**

**Cry aloud at Beth Aven,
'Look behind you, O Benjamin!'
Ephraim shall be desolate in the day of rebuke;
Among the tribes of Israel I make known what is
sure."**

a. **The pride of Israel testifies to his face:** Like all rebellion, Israel's rebellion was centered on *pride*. They arrogantly thought that what God said didn't really matter compared to their own opinions and desires.

b. **They shall go to seek the LORD, but they will not find Him:** When God promised to leave rebellious Israel alone (Hos 4:17), it means that when they make superficial gestures of repentance, **they will not find Him**. Their repentance was superficial because **they do not direct their deeds toward turning to their God**.

i. In many ways today, people *think* they are seeking God when they really aren't. It's just a superficial investigation. For example, a man might say, "I grew up in the Baptist church and couldn't find God there. So I went to the Methodist church and couldn't find God there. Then I went to the Pentecostal church, but couldn't find God there. Now I'm at the Presbyterian church and can't find God" (paraphrased from Boice). You may imagine you have searched hard after God, but that is an illusion. The truth is that you are running away from God. When He started to get close to you at the Baptist church, you left it and became a Methodist. When He started to get close to you at the Methodist church, you became a Pentecostal. You've followed the same pattern – a superficial search for God that backs away when you really start getting close to God.

ii. **He has withdrawn Himself from them:** It can happen. We can be so set in our sin and rebellion that

God just leaves us to ourselves. Usually we don't even notice at first, but when we call upon the LORD and do **not find Him**, then we start to see the result of pushing God away.

c. **Ephraim shall be desolate in the day of rebuke:** Because God **has withdrawn Himself from them**, they will find no help or refuge when the Assyrian army attacks. They will be made **desolate**.

B. Israel's sinful trust in man for deliverance.

1. *(10-13) Israel and Judah looked to man's wisdom.*

"The princes of Judah are like those who remove a landmark;

I will pour out my wrath on them like water.

Ephraim is oppressed *and* broken in judgment,

Because he willingly walked by *human* precept.

Therefore I *will be* to Ephraim like a moth,

And to the house of Judah like rottenness.

When Ephraim saw his sickness,

And Judah saw his wound,

Then Ephraim went to Assyria

And sent to King Jareb;

Yet he cannot cure you,

Nor heal you of your wound."

a. **The princes of Judah are like those who remove a landmark:** This means that the political leaders of Judah were corrupt and cheaters. They were the kind of men who would change property boundaries to their advantage if they thought they could get away with it. This reminds us that while Judah may have been better than Israel, they still had to repent.

i. "Judah's leaders, however, were not shifting physical property lines but spiritual lines established by God, changing the boundary between right and

wrong, between true and false religion, between the true God and the idols.” (Wood)

ii. We can imagine a citizen of Judah reading Hosea’s prophecy and being a bit smug that their neighbor to the north was so roundly rebuked. God reminds Judah that she has her own sin to deal with.

b. **He willingly walked by human precept:** Ephraim’s sinned by living by man’s standards and opinions instead of God’s. We can’t walk **by human precept** unless we first reject God’s precepts, and that was exactly what Israel did.

i. **Ephraim went to Assyria:** Israel was foolish enough to trust in man - her eventual conqueror – instead of trusting in God. Choosing a **King Jareb** instead of the LORD is always foolish and ends in ruin.

ii. “‘Jareb’ is not a known Assyrian’s name but means ‘warrior’.” (Wood)

c. **Like a moth... like rottenness:** God will be the one who eats away and corrodes what Israel and Judah have. They will not be blessed, and they will not increase.

2. (14-15) *God’s judgment and the goal behind it.*

**“For I will be like a lion to Ephraim,
And like a young lion to the house of Judah.
I, even I, will tear *them* and go away;
I will take *them* away, and no one shall rescue.
I will return again to My place
Till they acknowledge their offense.
Then they will seek My face;
In their affliction they will earnestly seek Me.”**

a. **I will be like a lion:** God’s judgment would come against Israel and Judah in subtle ways (*like a moth... like rottenness*). But it would also come in obvious,

unmistakable ways. Both a moth and **a lion** bring destruction, just in different ways.

b. In their affliction they will earnestly seek Me:

This was the goal of God's judgment against Israel. The goal was not destruction, but restoration. Sadly, it is often only in our **affliction** that we **earnestly seek** the LORD. Why not seek the LORD now, before **affliction** forces you to?

Israel and Judah Are Unrepentant

Hos 6:1 The people say, "Let's return to the LORD! He has hurt us, but he will be sure to heal us; he has wounded us, but he will bandage our wounds, won't he?"

Hos 6:2 In two or three days he will revive us, and we will live in his presence.

Hos 6:3 Let us try to know the LORD. He will come to us as surely as the day dawns, as surely as the spring rains fall upon the earth."

Hos 6:4 But the LORD says, "Israel and Judah, what am I going to do with you? Your love for me disappears as quickly as morning mist; it is like dew, that vanishes early in the day.

Hos 6:5 That is why I have sent my prophets to you with my message of judgment and destruction. What I want from you is plain and clear:

Hos 6:6 I want your constant love, not your animal sacrifices. I would rather have my people know me than burn offerings to me.

Hos 6:7 "But as soon as they entered the land at Adam, they broke the covenant I had made with them.

Hos 6:8 Gilead is a city full of evil people and murderers.

Hos 6:9 The priests are like a gang of robbers who wait in ambush for someone. Even on the road to the holy place at

Shechem they commit murder. And they do all this evil deliberately!

Hos 6:10 I have seen a horrible thing in Israel: my people have defiled themselves by worshiping idols.

Hos 6:11 "And as for you, people of Judah, I have set a time to punish you also for what you are doing.

Hosea 6:1-11

Hosea 6 - "Come, Let Us Return to the Lord"

A. A call to return to the LORD.

1. (1-2) Israel should trust in the God who chastened her.

**Come, and let us return to the LORD;
For He has torn, but He will heal us;
He has stricken, but He will bind us up.
After two days He will revive us;
On the third day He will raise us up,
That we may live in His sight.**

a. **He has torn, but He will heal us:** Hosea prays with the right heart in response to the chastening hand of God. Instead of arguing with God, or resenting His correction, Hosea leads Israel in humble prayer.

i. This is a prayer that trusts the love of God, and sees His loving hand even in correction. Often, a rebellious child will complain that their parents do not love them. Of course, the parents do love the child, but in their rebellion and lack of submission, they can't receive or respond to that love. Hosea prays with a different heart.

b. **After two days He will revive us; on the third day He will raise us up:** Hosea prayed this full of confidence in God's love and power to restore. In the prayer, there is a shadowy prophecy of Jesus' resurrection on the **third day**. The context supports this

wonderfully; on the cross Jesus was **torn** and **stricken** for our sake, yet He was also gloriously raised up **on the third day**.

2. (3) *Walking in confidence.*

Let us know,

Let us pursue the knowledge of the LORD.

His going forth is established as the morning;

He will come to us like the rain,

Like the latter *and* former rain to the earth.

a. **Let us pursue the knowledge of the LORD:**

Israel's problem was described back in Hos 4:6 (*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge*). Hosea leads the nation in a repentant correction of this problem.

i. We should also know that when we **pursue the knowledge of the Lord**, He blesses it. It must be more than superficial, it must be a pursuit. But when we endeavor to know the Lord, especially through His word, He reveals Himself to us. *He who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.* (Heb 11:6)

b. **He will come to us like the rain, like the latter and former rain:** In Israel, the only way crops were watered was by **rain**. So farmer waited for the rain with great anticipation. When we anticipate and wait for God with this kind of earnest expectation, He answers and **will come to us**.

i. Clarke on **the latter and former rain to the earth**: "The first, to prepare the earth for seed; this fell in *autumn*: the second, to prepare the full ear for the harvest; this fell *in spring*."

ii. "Notice, again, it is a repeated gift. He shall give the former rain and the latter rain. If you have had grace once the Lord has more for you. Did you have

happy times when old Dr. So-and-so was your pastor? Well, the doctor is dead, but God is not. Were you very much delighted when you used to sit in such-and-such a church, in years gone by, and have you moved into the country now? Yes, but God has not moved. He is in the country as well as in the town. You tell me you had such happy times when you were young. Yes, but God is neither younger nor older. Go to him, for he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Do you suppose that, because he gave you the former rain, he has emptied the bottles of heaven?" (Spurgeon)

c. He will come to us like the rain, like the latter and former rain to the earth: This passage along with others (Deu 11:14, Joe 2:23) were taken to give the name of the "Latter Rain Movement" starting in 1948.

i. In 1948, a Oneness Pentecostal minister named William Branham held meetings at an orphanage and school founded by a Foursquare Church in North Battleford, Saskatchewan. Those attending the meeting were so impressed by the supernatural works - healing, prophecy, word of knowledge, and strange phenomenon - that they considered it a beginning of a new work of God on earth. In their newsletter, this is how they described it:

"All the great outpourings of the past have had their outstanding truths. Luther's truth was Justification by Faith. Wesley's was Sanctification. The Baptists taught the premillennial coming of Christ. The Missionary Alliance taught Divine Healing. The Pentecostal outpouring has restored the Baptism of the Holy Ghost to its rightful place. But the next great outpouring is going to be marked by all these other truths plus such a demonstration of the nine gifts of

the Spirit as the world, not even the Apostolic world, has ever witnessed before. This revival will be short and will be the last before the Rapture of the Church."

ii. They felt that the Pentecostal denominations of their day were "dead" and "dry," and needed the blessing of the "Latter Rain," which would especially be marked by miraculous signs and supernatural works. The Pentecostal denominations – notably the Assemblies of God and the Foursquare Church denounced the Branham and the Latter Rain movement for both their teaching and practices.

iii. William Branham continued, drawing large crowds to his prophecy and healing crusades. He and a young evangelist named Oral Roberts led the Latter Rain Movement for several years. Branham's doctrine became more and more aberrant. Branham believed that the word of God was given in three forms: the Zodiac, the Egyptian pyramids, and the written scriptures. He also taught the "serpent seed" doctrine, which was based on his interpretation of Gen 3:13, saying that Eve had sexual relations with the serpent in the Garden of Eden.

iv. The Latter Rain Movement, as led by William Branham and Oral Roberts eventually faded from prominence. Branham himself died in a traffic collision with a drunk driver in 1965. He died on Christmas Eve, and his faithful followers believed that he would rise from the dead, so they delayed his burial for several days. But the influence of the Latter Rain movement lived on. The Latter Rain popularized many attitudes and doctrines popular in revival movements today:

- The “five-fold ministry” and “restoration of apostle and prophets.”
- The “foundational truths” of Heb 6:1-2.
- An emphasis on signs and wonders as marks of true revival.
- A strong emphasis on unity.
- Replacement theology, replacing Israel with the church.
- Dominion theology, saying the church will conquer and rule the world.
- An elitist attitude, promoting the idea of a group of “super-christians.”

v. Many researchers – and many within these modern groups today – believe that many modern “revival” movements are really just a continuation of the Latter Rain movement. Movements such as “Joel’s Army,” the Manifest Sons of God, the Dominion Movement, the Kansas City Prophets, the Toronto Blessing, the Pensacola Revival are connected in some way to the Latter Rain movement. For example, Paul Cain – later to re-emerge as head of the Kansas City Prophets in 1989 - traveled with William Branham and called him “the greatest prophet that ever lived.”

vi. The modern Latter Rain movement believes: “The Latter Rain is God’s great end-time ministry. This concept as revealed in the Bible, comprises the restitution of the church to it’s rightful place, the enormous last day revival and the harvest of souls before the great and terrible Day of the Lord. It is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh promised to us in the last days and the restoration of apostolic and prophetic gifts.” (From latter-rain.com)

B. The sin of Israel and Judah.

1. (4-6) How God's people missed God's heart.

"O Ephraim, what shall I do to you?

O Judah, what shall I do to you?

For your faithfulness is like a morning cloud,

And like the early dew it goes away.

Therefore I have hewn *them* by the prophets,

I have slain them by the words of My mouth;

And your judgments *are like light that* goes forth.

For I desire mercy and not sacrifice,

And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings."

a. **Your faithfulness is like a morning cloud:** It wasn't that there was *no faithfulness* among the people of God. It's just that whatever **faithfulness** there was quickly dissipated **like the early dew**.

b. **For I desire mercy and not sacrifice:** At this time, God's people were still good at bringing sacrifice (Hos 5:6). But they had forsaken **mercy**, and they abandoned **mercy** because they gave up the knowledge of God and truth (Hos 4:1). God would rather have right hearts, full of truth and mercy than sacrifice.

i. Jesus twice quoted this passage of Hosea to the religious leaders of His day (Mat 9:13; Mat 12:7). They also missed the heart of God, focusing on the wrong and superficial things.

c. **And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings:** Israel brought animals for sacrifice, but they never brought themselves as a living sacrifice (Rom 12:1). They missed what God really wants: a deep, close relationship with Him.

2. (7-11) The transgression of idolatry.

**"But like men they transgressed the covenant;
There they dealt treacherously with Me.
Gilead *is* a city of evildoers,
And defiled with blood.
As bands of robbers lie in wait for a man,
So the company of priests murder on the way to
Shechem;
Surely they commit lewdness.
I have seen a horrible thing in the house of Israel:
There *is* the harlotry of Ephraim;
Israel is defiled.
Also, O Judah, a harvest is appointed for you,
When I return the captives of My people."**

a. **As bands of robbers lie in wait for a man, so the company of priests murder:** When the priests went to places of pagan sacrifice, it was a thieving, killing sin.

b. **Judah, a harvest is appointed for you, when I return the captives:** When the people of God came back into the land after the Babylonian exile, they mainly settled in the area of Judah. The **harvest** of returned exiles was mainly for Judah, not for Israel.

Hos 7:1 "Whenever I want to heal my people Israel and make them prosperous again, all I can see is their wickedness and the evil they do. They cheat one another; they break into houses and steal; they rob people in the streets.

Hos 7:2 It never enters their heads that I will remember all this evil; but their sins surround them, and I cannot avoid seeing them."

Hos 7:3 The LORD says, "People deceive the king and his officers by their evil plots.

Hos 7:4 They are all treacherous and disloyal. Their hatred smolders like the fire in an oven, which is not stirred by the baker until the dough is ready to bake.

Hos 7:5 On the day of the king's celebration they made the king and his officials drunk and foolish with wine.

Hos 7:6 Yes, they burned like an oven with their plotting. All night their anger smoldered, and in the morning it burst into flames.

Hos 7:7 "In the heat of their anger they murdered their rulers. Their kings have been assassinated one after another, but no one prays to me for help."

Hos 7:8 The LORD says, "The people of Israel are like a half-baked loaf of bread. They rely on the nations around them

Hos 7:9 and do not realize that this reliance on foreigners has robbed them of their strength. Their days are numbered, but they don't even know it.

Hos 7:10 The arrogance of the people of Israel cries out against them. In spite of everything that has happened, they have not returned to me, the LORD their God.

Hos 7:11 Israel flits around like a silly pigeon; first her people call on Egypt for help, and then they run to Assyria!

Hos 7:12 But I will spread out a net and catch them like birds as they go by. I will punish them for the evil they have done.

Hos 7:13 "They are doomed! They have left me and rebelled against me. They will be destroyed. I wanted to save them, but their worship of me was false.

Hos 7:14 They have not prayed to me sincerely, but instead they throw themselves down and wail as the heathen do. When they pray for grain and wine, they gash themselves like pagans. What rebels they are!

Hos 7:15 Even though I was the one who brought them up and made them strong, they plotted against me.

Hos 7:16 They keep on turning away from me to a god that is powerless. They are as unreliable as a crooked bow.

Because their leaders talk arrogantly, they will die a violent death, and the Egyptians will laugh."

Hosea 7:1-16

Hosea 7 - The Oven, the Bread, and the Dove

A. A heart like an oven.

1. (1-3) The sinful ignorance and willful blindness of Israel.

**"When I would have healed Israel,
Then the iniquity of Ephraim was uncovered,
And the wickedness of Samaria.
For they have committed fraud;
A thief comes in;
A band of robbers takes spoil outside.
They do not consider in their hearts
That I remember all their wickedness;
Now their own deeds have surrounded them;
They are before My face.
They make a king glad with their wickedness,
And princes with their lies."**

a. **They do not consider in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness:** The problem among the people and leaders of Israel was they forgot – willfully – that the LORD saw and remembered their sin. We often deliberately forget that the LORD sees and remembers when we sin. It may be secret before men, but not before God – He says, **"they are before My face."**

i. The believer today should ask themselves: Have you forgotten? Do you think God doesn't see? Do you think God is blind to your adultery or pre-marital sex? Do you think your pornography habit goes unnoticed? Do you think God's eyes are closed when you get drunk or take drugs? There are many church-going

people today who think that God forgets or never sees such things, because they do them and then they come to church and make a profession of godliness, pretending that those things are never part of their life.

ii. There is a precious promise for those who come to God under the New Covenant: *For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more (Jer 31:34)*. We often wish that time would make God forget our sin, but it doesn't. Only the atoning substitute of Jesus, crucified in our place under the New Covenant makes God forget our sin.

b. **When I would have healed Israel:** God was willing to heal Israel from their sin and its effects, but not as long as they acted as if God did not see their sin. They had to treat God as He really is, a God who sees and remembers unrepentant, uncovered sin.

c. **They make a king glad with their wickedness:** This phrase, together with *princes have made him sick (Hos 7:5)* and *all their kings have fallen (Hos 7:7)* probably all refer to one of the successful assassination plots against the throne of Israel during the ministry of Hosea. Since there were four kings violently overthrown during his ministry, it's hard to exactly know which one he means.

2. (4-7) *Israel's heart is inflamed after idols.*

"They are all adulterers.

Like an oven heated by a baker;

**He ceases stirring *the* fire after kneading the dough,
Until it is leavened.**

In the day of our king

Princes have made *him* sick, inflamed with wine;

He stretched out his hand with scoffers.

They prepare their heart like an oven,

**While they lie in wait;
Their baker sleeps all night;
In the morning it burns like a flaming fire.
They are all hot, like an oven,
And have devoured their judges;
All their kings have fallen.
None among them calls upon Me.”**

a. **Like an oven heated by a baker:** Israel was inflamed with desire and passion after idols like the coals of a freshly stoked fire, ready to bake bread.

i. Paul used the same image of “burning lust” in 1Co 7:9 : *but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.*

b. **None among them calls upon Me:** Israel could not be **hot, like an oven** after idols and also call upon the LORD. They did in fact continue to sacrifice to the LORD (Hos 5:6) but it was empty ceremony, not a true calling upon their covenant God.

3. (8-10) The pride and stubbornness of Israel.

**“Ephraim has mixed himself among the peoples;
Ephraim is a cake unturned.
Aliens have devoured his strength,
But he does not know *it*;
Yes, gray hairs are here and there on him,
Yet he does not know *it*.
And the pride of Israel testifies to his face,
But they do not return to the LORD their God,
Nor seek Him for all this.”**

a. **Ephraim is a cake unturned:** The idea is of a “half-baked” cake. In that day, bread was often prepared as a cake that was cooked on both sides, something like a pancake. In thinking they can serve both the Lord and

idols, Israel is like an **unturnd** pancake – burned on one side, uncooked on the other.

b. Aliens have devoured his strength, but he does not know it: This makes the tragedy of Israel's ruin worse. The nation is being ravaged by sin but **does not know it**. They should know it, because even **the pride of Israel testifies to his face** – yet in their blind ignorance **they do not return to the LORD their God**.

i. Man has an amazing ability to deceive himself when he is in sin. Well did Jeremiah say, *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?* (Jer 17:9). Considering how easily we deceive our self, and how our sin can be apparent to everyone but us, Israel's condition isn't unusual:

- Burned and ruined – but he does not know it.
- Strength devoured – but he does not know it.
- Aging and weakening – but he does not know it.
- Pride testifies against him – but he does not know it.

ii. It was said of Samson after Delilah cut his hair: *But he did not know that the LORD had departed from him* (Jdg 16:20). This is where the people of Israel – and some followers of God today – were. They are far from God and already suffering the effects, but they can't see it.

c. Yes, gray hairs are here and there on him, yet he does not know it: Israel is as foolish as an old man who thinks and acts like he is still young.

i. "He began but to decline and decay, as a man doth when he grows toward 50." (John Trapp, 1654)

B. Silly like a dove.

1. (11-12) *Like a dove, Israel flies about to the nations.*

**"Ephraim also is like a silly dove, without sense;
They call to Egypt,
They go to Assyria.
Wherever they go, I will spread My net on them;
I will bring them down like birds of the air;
I will chastise them
According to what their congregation has heard."**

a. **Ephraim also is like a silly dove, without sense:**
Hosea piles image upon image. Now Israel is like a bird fluttering about, confused and without direction. They think they can escape God by running to other nations, but the Lord says, **"I will spread My net on them."**

b. **I will chastise them according to what their congregation has heard:** Israel's guilt is increased **according to what** they have **heard**. Greater knowledge means great accountability. As Jesus said, *for everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more (Luk 12:48).*

2. (13-16) *In running to the nations, Israel has run away from God.*

**"Woe to them, for they have fled from Me!
Destruction to them,
Because they have transgressed against Me!
Though I redeemed them,
Yet they have spoken lies against Me.
They did not cry out to Me with their heart
When they wailed upon their beds.
They assemble together for grain and new wine,
They rebel against Me;
Though I disciplined *and* strengthened their arms,
Yet they devise evil against Me;
They return, *but* not to the Most High;**

**They are like a treacherous bow.
Their princes shall fall by the sword
For the cursings of their tongue.
This *shall* be their derision in the land of Egypt."**

a. **They return, but not the Most High:** Israel saw their *problem*, but not their *sin*. When God's hand is against man, he easily sees he has a problem but often does not see it as *sin against the LORD*. So when Israel had problems, they **wailed upon their beds**, but not to the LORD. They sought remedies, but not from **the Most High**.

b. **They are like a treacherous bow:** Hosea adds another image, of a faulty bow that won't shoot an arrow straight. Everything that comes from Israel misses the mark, because **they are like a treacherous bow**. They are like a useless and dangerous weapon.

Israel Will Reap the Whirlwind

Hos 8:1 The LORD says, "Sound the alarm! Enemies are swooping down on my land like eagles! My people have broken the covenant I made with them and have rebelled against my teaching.

Hos 8:2 Even though they call me their God and claim that they are my people and that they know me,

Hos 8:3 they have rejected what is good. Because of this their enemies will pursue them.

Hos 8:4 "My people chose kings, but they did it on their own. They appointed leaders, but without my approval. They took their silver and gold and made idols—for their own destruction.

Hos 8:5 I hate the gold bull worshiped by the people of the city of Samaria. I am furious with them. How long will it be before they give up their idolatry?

Hos 8:6 An Israelite craftsman made the idol, and it is not a god at all! The gold bull worshiped in Samaria will be smashed to pieces!

Hos 8:7 When they sow the wind, they will reap a storm! A field of grain that doesn't ripen can never produce any bread. But even if it did, foreigners would eat it up.

Hos 8:8 Israel has become like any other nation and is as useless as a broken pot.

Hos 8:9 Stubborn as wild donkeys, the people of Israel go their own way. They have gone off to seek help from Assyria and have paid other nations to protect them.

Hos 8:10 But now I am going to gather them together and punish them. Soon they will writhe in pain when the emperor of Assyria oppresses them.

Hos 8:11 "The more altars the people of Israel build for removing sin, the more places they have for sinning!

Hos 8:12 I write down countless teachings for the people, but they reject them as strange and foreign.

Hos 8:13 They offer sacrifices to me and eat the meat of the sacrifices. But I, the LORD, am not pleased with them, and now I will remember their sin and punish them for it; I will send them back to Egypt!

Hos 8:14 "The people of Israel have built palaces, but they have forgotten their own Maker. The people of Judah have built fortified cities. But I will send fire that will burn down their palaces and their cities."

Hosea 8:1-14

Hosea 8 - Sow the Wind, Reap the Whirlwind

A. Sowing idolatry, reaping exile.

1. (1-6) Casting off God and embracing idols.

"Set the trumpet to your mouth!

He shall come like an eagle against the house of the

**LORD,
Because they have transgressed My covenant
And rebelled against My law.
Israel will cry to Me,
'My God, we know You!'
Israel has rejected the good;
The enemy will pursue him.
They set up kings, but not by Me;
They made princes, but I did not acknowledge *them*.
From their silver and gold
They made idols for themselves;
That they might be cut off.
Your calf is rejected, O Samaria!
My anger is aroused against them;
How long until they attain to innocence?
For from Israel *is* even this:
A workman made it, and it *is* not God;
But the calf of Samaria shall be broken to pieces."**

a. **Set the trumpet to your mouth!** Trumpets were used to assemble God's people and to call troops to battle. Here, God commands the **trumpet** to sound to gather the mighty Assyrians against Israel for judgment, **because they have transgressed My covenant.**

b. **Israel will cry to Me, "My God, we know You!"** But their cry is not sincere, because **Israel has rejected the good.** They set up rulers and princes against the Lord, and were steeped in idolatry.

i. **My God, we know You!** But they didn't really know God. It will be the same way for many church-goers today. Jesus said, "*Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to*

them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" (Mat 7:22-23).

ii. **They set up kings, but not by Me:** "To choose leaders without the direction of God is not only sinful, it is foolish. Those who follow their own wisdom in the choice of leaders inevitably get what they deserve" (Boice).

c. **The calf of Samaria shall be broken to pieces:** Israel made beautiful idols out of silver and gold, but they will not stand. In judgment, God will break them **to pieces**.

i. **Your calf is rejected** "is literally 'your calf stinks.'" (Wood) That's what God thought of their idols!

2. (7-10) Israel judged and regathered.

**"They sow the wind,
And reap the whirlwind.
The stalk has no bud;
It shall never produce meal.
If it should produce,
Aliens would swallow it up.
Israel is swallowed up;
Now they are among the Gentiles
Like a vessel in which *is* no pleasure.
For they have gone up to Assyria,
Like a wild donkey alone by itself;
Ephraim has hired lovers.
Yes, though they have hired among the nations,
Now I will gather them;
And they shall sorrow a little,
Because of the burden of the king of princes."**

a. **They sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind:** It will seem to Israel that the judgment they receive is worse than the sin they committed. This isn't true in the

sense of God being worse to us than our sin deserves, but it is true in how judgment feels. This is usually because our sin is *sown* over a long period of time, but often *reaped* in a contracted period of judgment.

b. **Now they are among the Gentiles... now I will gather them:** God promised that Israel would face the conquering Assyrians and exile, but also that He would one day **gather them** again. This note of mercy is sprinkled through the song warning of judgment.

B. Why God will not accept their offerings.

1. (11-13) *Israel considers God's word a **strange thing**.*

**"Because Ephraim has made many altars for sin,
They have become for him altars for sinning.
I have written for him the great things of My law,
But they were considered a strange thing.
For the sacrifices of My offerings they sacrifice flesh
and eat it,
But the LORD does not accept them.
Now He will remember their iniquity and punish their
sins.
They shall return to Egypt."**

a. **They have become for him altars for sinning:** Israel foolishly built **many altars for sin**. So it is no surprise that those altars became **altars for sinning**. When we give ourselves opportunity and occasion for sin, it is never surprising when we end up **sinning**.

b. **I have written for him the great things of My law, but they were considered a strange thing:** In their sin and idolatry, Israel also rejected the Word of God. God had **great things** for Israel, but they seemed like a **strange thing** because their hearts were far from God.

c. **I have written for him:** This tells us the *author* of the Bible – God Himself. Spurgeon said it well: “This volume is the writing of the living God: each letter was penned with an Almighty finger; each word in it dropped from the everlasting lips, each sentence was dictated by the Holy Spirit.”

i. “If this be the Word of God, what will become of some of you who have not read it for the last month? Most people treat the Bible very politely... When they get home, they lay it up in a drawer till next Sunday morning; then it comes out again for a little bit of a treat and goes to chapel; that is all the poor Bible gets in the way of an airing. That is your style of entertaining this heavenly messenger. There is dust enough on some of your Bibles to write “damnation” with your fingers.” (Spurgeon)

d. **The great things of My law:** This tells us the *content* of the Bible - **great things**. The Bible speaks of the greatest and most important things of both life and eternity.

i. “The Bible treats of great things, and of great things only. There is nothing in this Bible which is unimportant. Every verse in it has a solemn meaning, and if we have not found it out yet, we hope yet to do it.” (Spurgeon)

e. **But they were considered a strange thing:** This tells us the way the Bible is received by the *natural man*. Paul expressed the same idea in 1Co 2:14 : *But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*. The Word of God and the things of the spirit are **great things**, but seem like a **strange thing** when man is in sin and idolatry.

i. Sometimes people reject the Bible because they think "science" is superior. "But the science of Jesus Christ is the most excellent of sciences. Let no one turn away from the Bible, because it is not a book of learning and wisdom. It is. Would ye know astronomy? It is here: it tells you of the Sun of Righteousness and the Star of Bethlehem. Would you know botany? It is here: it tells you of the plant of renown-the Lily of the Valley and the Rose of Sharon. Would you know geology and mineralogy? You shall learn it here: for you may read of the Rock of Ages, and the White Stone with a name graven thereon, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it. Would ye study history? Here is the most ancient of all the records of the history of the human race. Whatever your science is, come and bend o'er this book; your science is here" (Spurgeon).

f. **But the LORD does not accept them:** Sure, they still brought sacrifices to the LORD. But it was all just an outward ceremony because they were still steeped in sin and idolatry. Therefore their sin remained uncovered, and God will **remember their iniquity and punish their sins.**

2. (14) *When God's people forget their Maker, there is no refuge.*

**"For Israel has forgotten his Maker,
And has built temples;
Judah also has multiplied fortified cities;
But I will send fire upon his cities,
And it shall devour his palaces."**

a. **For Israel has forgotten his Maker:** Israel **built temples**, but not unto the LORD who made them. Therefore, the judgment described in this chapter is coming upon them.

b. **Judah also has multiplied fortified cities:** While Israel practiced outright idolatry, Judah was guilty of a more subtle sin. They trusted in the **fortified cities** they built against the Assyrians. Those **cities** would be of no help (**I will send fire upon his cities**), and the only the LORD would preserve Judah from total destruction (Isa 37:33-36).

i. Perhaps we can capture some of the ungodly heart of Israel and Judah by examining our own attraction to bigness and nice facilities. What could be wrong with success and nice buildings? They easily become idols if your heart turns from God. If God brings size and great buildings, it is wonderful – as long as we don't turn our eyes of Him, making those things idols.

The Lord Will Punish Israel

Hos 9:1 People of Israel, stop celebrating your festivals like pagans. You have turned away from your God and have been unfaithful to him. All over the land you have sold yourselves like prostitutes to the god Baal and have loved the grain you thought he paid you with!

Hos 9:2 But soon you will not have enough grain and olive oil, and there will be no wine.

Hos 9:3 The people of Israel will not remain in the LORD's land, but will have to go back to Egypt and will have to eat forbidden food in Assyria.

Hos 9:4 In those foreign lands they will not be able to make wine offerings to the LORD or bring their sacrifices to him. Their food will defile everyone who eats it, like food eaten at funerals. It will be used only to satisfy their hunger; none of it will be taken as an offering to the LORD's Temple.

Hos 9:5 And when the time comes for the appointed festivals in honor of the LORD, what will they do then?

Hos 9:6 When the disaster comes and the people are scattered, the Egyptians will gather them up—gather them

for burial there at Memphis! Their treasures of silver and the places where their homes once stood will be overgrown with weeds and thorn bushes.

Hos 9:7 The time for punishment has come, the time when people will get what they deserve. When that happens, Israel will know it! "This prophet," you say, "is a fool. This inspired man is insane." You people hate me so much because your sin is so great.

Hos 9:8 God has sent me as a prophet to warn his people Israel. Yet wherever I go, you try to trap me like a bird. Even in God's Temple the people are the prophet's enemies.

Hos 9:9 They are hopelessly evil in what they do, just as they were at Gibeah. God will remember their sin and punish them for it.

Hos 9:10 The LORD says, "When I first found Israel, it was like finding grapes growing in the desert. When I first saw your ancestors, it was like seeing the first ripe figs of the season. But when they came to Mount Peor, they began to worship Baal and soon became as disgusting as the gods they loved.

Hos 9:11 Israel's greatness will fly away like a bird, and there will be no more children born to them, no more women pregnant, no more children conceived.

Hos 9:12 But even if they did bring up children, I would take them away and not leave one alive. When I abandon these people, terrible things will happen to them."

Hos 9:13 LORD, I can see their children being hunted down and killed.

Hos 9:14 What shall I ask you to do to these people? Make their women barren! Make them unable to nurse their babies!

Hos 9:15 The LORD says, "All their evildoing began in Gilgal. It was there that I began to hate them. And because

of the evil they have done, I will drive them out of my land. I will not love them any more; all their leaders have rebelled against me.

Hos 9:16 The people of Israel are like a plant whose roots have dried up and which bears no fruit. They will have no children, but even if they did, I would kill the children so dear to them."

Hos 9:17 The God I serve will reject his people, because they have not listened to him. They will become wanderers among the nations.

Hosea 9:1-17

Hosea 9 - Exiled and Dried Up

A. Israel exiled in judgment.

1. (1-4) The end of the good life in Israel.

**Do not rejoice, O Israel, with joy like *other* peoples,
For you have played the harlot against your God.
You have made love *for* hire on every threshing floor.
The threshing floor and the winepress
Shall not feed them,
And the new wine shall fail in her.
They shall not dwell in the LORD's land,
But Ephraim shall return to Egypt,
And shall eat unclean *things* in Assyria.
They shall not offer wine *offerings* to the LORD,
Nor shall their sacrifices be pleasing to Him.
It shall be like bread of mourners to them;
All who eat it shall be defiled.
For their bread *shall be* for their *own* life;
It shall not come into the house of the LORD.**

a. **Do not rejoice, O Israel, with joy like other peoples:** At the time Hosea brought this prophecy, things perhaps were not so bad in Israel. Maybe there

were plenty of fun and good times among the people. But they shouldn't rejoice **like other peoples**, because judgment was on the way.

i. "It was probably the case, though we do not know this for sure, that Hosea delivered the opening part of this oracle as a sermon on the occasion of a harvest festival... characterized by feasting, mirth, and dancing." (Boice)

b. **You have made love for hire on every threshing floor:** Israel practiced idolatry on the **threshing floor**, a place where grain was processed. They worshipped idols here because they believed that it helped the harvest. Because of their idolatry, the LORD would curse their harvest, and **the threshing floor and the winepress shall not feed them.**

c. **They shall not dwell in the Lord's land:** Not only would God curse their grain and grape harvest, but He would also cast them out of the land in exile to both Egypt and Assyria. In the lands of exile there would be no bread or food for sacrifice to the LORD, only for survival (**their bread shall be for their own life**).

2. (5-9) *The days of Israel's punishment in Egypt.*

**What will you do in the appointed day,
And in the day of the feast of the LORD?
For indeed they are gone because of destruction.
Egypt shall gather them up;
Memphis shall bury them.
Nettles shall possess their valuables of silver;
Thorns *shall be* in their tents.
The days of punishment have come;
The days of recompense have come.
Israel knows!
The prophet *is* a fool,
The spiritual man *is* insane,**

Because of the greatness of your iniquity and great enmity.

The watchman of Ephraim *is* with my God;

But the prophet *is* a fowler's snare in all his ways;

Enmity in the house of his God.

They are deeply corrupted,

As in the days of Gibeah.

He will remember their iniquity;

He will punish their sins.

a. **They are gone because of destruction:** Israel did not honor the LORD in their **appointed** feast days, so they LORD will take them away. In their lands of exile, they will not be able to honor the feasts of the LORD.

b. **The prophet is a fool, the spiritual man is insane:**

This is what the people of Israel said about Hosea. When things prospered and everyone was happy, Hosea announced coming judgment and called for repentance. They thought he was a fool and crazy.

i. "They said in effect, 'Who in his right mind would prophesy a judgment like this when we are in the midst of such a bountiful harvest, in itself a proof of God's blessing?'" (Boice)

c. **As in the days of Gibeah:** Judges 19 describes horrific crimes of perversion and violence in Israel in the days of the Judges. Hosea says that in his day it is just as bad in Israel.

B. Israel barren and dried up in judgment.

1. (10-14) God sends barrenness and bereavement.

"I found Israel

Like grapes in the wilderness;

I saw your fathers

As the firstfruits on the fig tree in its first season.

But they went to Baal Peor,

**And separated themselves *to that* shame;
They became an abomination like the thing they loved.**

**As for Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like a bird—
No birth, no pregnancy, and no conception!**

**Though they bring up their children,
Yet I will bereave them to the last man.**

Yes, woe to them when I depart from them!

Just as I saw Ephraim like Tyre, planted in a pleasant place,

So Ephraim will bring out his children to the murderer.”

Give them, O LORD—

What will You give?

Give them a miscarrying womb

And dry breasts!

a. **Like grapes in the wilderness... as the firstfruits on the fig tree:** God fondly remembered the days when Israel was faithful and fruitful unto Him. **Grapes in the wilderness** and the **firstfruits on the fig tree** are unexpected blessings. There was a time when Israel was something special to God, as if one found luscious **grapes in the wilderness**.

i. “While they were faithful, they were as *acceptable* to me as *ripe grapes* would be to a *thirsty traveler* in the desert.” (Clarke)

b. **But they went to Baal Peor:** Israel’s sin and idolatry in the days of Hosea was like their sin at **Baal Peor** in Numbers 25, associated with sexual immorality and idolatry.

c. **They became an abomination like the thing they loved:** Israel loved their disgraceful idols, and they had become like them. We will become like the god we love

and serve, whether it is the LORD or like an **abomination**.

d. **No birth, no pregnancy, and no conception:** In contrast to their past fruitfulness, now Israel will experience barrenness and bereavement (**I will bereave them to the last man**), given to them by the God they rejected.

e. **Give them, O LORD – What will You give?** The idea is that Hosea began an angry prayer against the people ("**Give them, O LORD**"), then he stopped because he checked his heart and didn't know what to pray ("**What will you give?**"). In the end, he asked for **a miscarrying womb and dry breasts**. Really, Hosea prayed for mercy. Knowing the coming judgment, he prayed "LORD, give them few children so those children will not have to face the horrors of Your coming judgment."

i. Sometimes those who see themselves – perhaps accurately – as more spiritual and closer to God than others in a church or group get angry and frustrated with those who don't seem to have hearts burning for the LORD. Their frustration is understandable but the pause in Hosea's prayer should give them pause. It is a good thing to long for revival and spiritual passion among God's people, but if that makes us proud, angry, or bitter against others then Satan has won a great victory.

2. (15-17) God sends dryness and wandering upon Israel.

**"All their wickedness is in Gilgal,
For there I hated them.
Because of the evil of their deeds
I will drive them from My house;
I will love them no more.
All their princes are rebellious.**

**Ephraim is stricken,
Their root is dried up;
They shall bear no fruit.
Yes, were they to bear children,
I would kill the darlings of their womb.”
My God will cast them away,
Because they did not obey Him;
And they shall be wanderers among the nations.**

a. **All their wickedness is in Gilgal, for there I hated them:** As mentioned before in Hos 4:15, God despised the city of **Gilgal** as a center of idolatry in Israel. At one time, **Gilgal** was a place where prophets were trained under Elijah and Elisha (2Ki 2:1; 2Ki 4:38). But in Hosea’s day it had become a center of false worship (Hos 4:15; Hos 12:11; Amo 4:4; Amo 5:5).

b. **I will drive them from My house:** In this sense, exile was the perfect punishment for Israel. They had disgraced God’s **house**, His land, so He would “evict” them from His **house**.

c. **They shall bear no fruit... I would kill the beloved fruit of their womb:** One of the major reasons Israel went after idols like Baal and Ashtoreth was because those gods were thought to bring fertility and fruitfulness. God reminds Israel that He is really the LORD over the womb, and that He will turn their fruitfulness into barrenness.

d. **My God will cast them away, because they did not obey Him:** This is exactly what the LORD promised under the terms of the Old Covenant (Deu 30:14-18). Thankfully, we can come to God by faith in a new and better covenant, where He promises to remember our sins no more (Heb 8:12; Heb 10:16-17).

Hos 10:1 The people of Israel were like a grapevine that was full of grapes. The more prosperous they were, the

more altars they built. The more productive their land was, the more beautiful they made the sacred stone pillars they worship.

Hos 10:2 The people whose hearts are deceitful must now suffer for their sins. God will break down their altars and destroy their sacred pillars.

Hos 10:3 These people will soon be saying, "We have no king because we did not fear the LORD. But what could a king do for us anyway?"

Hos 10:4 They utter empty words and make false promises and useless treaties. Justice has become injustice, growing like poisonous weeds in a plowed field.

Hos 10:5 The people who live in the city of Samaria will be afraid and will mourn the loss of the gold bull at Bethaven. They and the priests who serve the idol will weep over it. They will wail when it is stripped of its golden splendor.

Hos 10:6 The idol will be carried off to Assyria as tribute to the great emperor. The people of Israel will be disgraced and put to shame because of the advice they followed.

Hos 10:7 Their king will be carried off, like a chip of wood on water.

Hos 10:8 The hilltop shrines of Aven, where the people of Israel worship idols, will be destroyed. Thorns and weeds will grow up over their altars. The people will call out to the mountains, "Hide us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!"

Hos 10:9 The LORD says, "The people of Israel have not stopped sinning against me since the time of their sin at Gibeah. So at Gibeah war will catch up with them.

Hos 10:10 I will attack this sinful people and punish them. Nations will join together against them, and they will be punished for their many sins.

Hos 10:11 "Israel was once like a well-trained young cow, ready and willing to thresh grain. But I decided to put a yoke on her beautiful neck and to harness her for harder

work. I made Judah pull the plow and Israel pull the harrow.

Hos 10:12 I said, 'Plow new ground for yourselves, plant righteousness, and reap the blessings that your devotion to me will produce. It is time for you to turn to me, your LORD, and I will come and pour out blessings upon you.'

Hos 10:13 But instead you planted evil and reaped its harvest. You have eaten the fruit produced by your lies. "Because you trusted in your chariots and in the large number of your soldiers,

Hos 10:14 war will come to your people, and all your fortresses will be destroyed. It will be like the day when King Shalman destroyed the city of Betharbel in battle, and mothers and their children were crushed to death.

Hos 10:15 That is what will happen to you, people of Bethel, because of the terrible evil that you have done. As soon as the battle begins, the king of Israel will die."

Hosea 10:1-15

Hosea 10 - Israel Has No King

A. The analysis of Israel's sinful state.

1. (1-2) Israel's empty vine.

Israel empties *his* vine;

He brings forth fruit for himself.

According to the multitude of his fruit

He has increased the altars;

According to the bounty of his land

They have embellished *his* sacred pillars.

Their heart is divided;

Now they are held guilty.

He will break down their altars;

He will ruin their sacred pillars.

a. **He brings forth fruit for himself:** God blessed Israel with material abundance, but they spent it on themselves and their own idolatrous desires (**he has increased the altars**). Israel enjoyed the blessing of God, but used those blessings in ungodly ways.

i. Paul warns against the same sin in Gal 5:13 :*For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh.* Sometimes as Christians we take the liberty and blessing God gives and use them in ungodly ways.

b. **Their heart is divided; now they are held guilty:** Because Israel had received blessing, they were more responsible than ever to use it wisely. Because they used God's bounty in wicked ways, God would **break down their altars** to pagan gods and **ruin their sacred pillars** made unto idols.

i. **Their heart is divided:** The word **divided** is *halaq*, which has the ideas of "**divided**" (Gen 14:15; Gen 49:7), of "smooth" (Gen 27:11, Psa 55:21) or of "flattering" (Psa 5:9; Psa 36:2). So, it may be accurate to translate this phrase as **their heart is divided**, but it may also be that God meant to say that Ephraim has a "smooth, flattering," insincere heart.

ii. The idea of Israel's "smooth" or "insincere" heart is reflected by the adulteries of Hosea's wife Gomer earlier in the book. In the same way that an unfaithful spouse will say they love their partner, all the while living a lie, is the same way Israel's heart was towards God.

iii. Israel had this divided, insincere heart and expressed it on the altars of idolatry. Now, **He will break down their altars**. "Now GOD will do in *judgment* what *they* should have done in *contrition*,

'break down their altars, and spoil their images'"
(Clarke).

2. (3-8) *Israel's empty throne.*

**For now they say,
"We have no king,
Because we did not fear the LORD.
And as for a king, what would he do for us?"
They have spoken words,
Swearing falsely in making a covenant.
Thus judgment springs up like hemlock in the furrows
of the field.
The inhabitants of Samaria fear
Because of the calf of Beth Aven.
For its people mourn for it,
And its priests shriek for it—
Because its glory has departed from it.
The idol also shall be carried to Assyria
As a present for King Jareb.
Ephraim shall receive shame,
And Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel.
As for Samaria, her king is cut off
Like a twig on the water.
Also the high places of Aven, the sin of Israel,
Shall be destroyed.
The thorn and thistle shall grow on their altars;
They shall say to the mountains, "Cover us!"
And to the hills, "Fall on us!"**

a. **We have no king:** Under the judgment of the LORD, foreign powers dominated Israel so they no longer had their own king. Even the idols they honored and trusted so much will be taken to foreign lands as treasure for foreign kings.

b. **The thorn and thistle shall grow on their altars:** After the desolation of exile, the once-busy pagan altars

of Israel were now overgrown with thorns and thistles. This was the result of Israel's rejection of the LORD and their embrace of pagan gods.

B. God's counsel to sinful Israel.

1. (9-11) God tells Israel to see their sin and to submit to His chastening.

**"O Israel, you have sinned from the days of Gibeah;
There they stood.**

**The battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity
Did not overtake them.**

When *it is* My desire, I will chasten them.

Peoples shall be gathered against them

When I bind them for their two transgressions.

Ephraim *is* a trained heifer

That loves to thresh *grain*;

But I harnessed her fair neck,

I will make Ephraim pull *a plow*.

Judah shall plow;

Jacob shall break his clods."

a. **You have sinned from the days of Gibeah: Gibeah** was already mentioned in Hos 9:9, recalling the horrific sin described in Judges 19. Even though there was a **battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity**, there was still iniquity in Israel. Here, God wanted a willfully blind Israel to see their sin and repent of it.

b. **When it is My desire, I will chasten them:** Like unruly farm animals, God would control and guide Israel and Jacob, even if they kicked against Him.

2. (12) God tells Israel to break up the hard ground of their heart.

Sow for yourselves righteousness;

Reap in mercy;

Break up your fallow ground,

**For it is time to seek the LORD,
Till He comes and rains righteousness on you.**

a. **Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy:** Israel had sown the seed of sin, and they would soon reap judgment from God. Even now, if they would sow **righteousness**, they would **reap in mercy** at the next harvest.

i. We all sow into our life but do we **sow** seeds of **righteousness**? What “crop” will grow up from the seeds planted today, or this past week, or this past month?

b. **Break up your fallow ground:** God builds on the picture of sowing and reaping by telling Israel to **break up your fallow ground** – ground that hasn’t been plowed for more than a year. It is ground that is hard and stubborn, resistant to the seed. It does little good to sow seed on **fallow ground**; it must be broken up first.

i. Sometimes when the word of God goes forth and seems to have little effect, it is because it falls on **fallow ground** – the hard ground that will not allow the seed of the word to penetrate and become fruitful.

ii. Since **fallow ground** is hard, it probably doesn’t “want” to be broken up. It is hard and compact, and the blade of the plow hurts as it cuts through. If the **fallow ground** could talk, it would probably cry out when it is plowed. Yet it is useless as ground as long as it is **fallow**.

iii. **For it is time to seek the LORD** reminds us of *how* we break up the fallow ground. We do it by seeking the LORD, not our self or idols.

iv. **For it is time** shows that the time to break up the fallow ground is *now*. “This should be immediately

done: the season is passing; and if you do not get the seed in the ground, the early rain will be past, and your fields will be unfruitful” (Clarke).

c. Till He comes and rains righteousness on you:

This tells us how long we should break up the fallow ground and sow the seed of righteousness. We do it until the harvest comes.

i. God use of the figures of sowing and reaping remind us that harvest is sometimes a season away. Sometimes people expect to sow sin for years, but to immediately **reap in mercy** after sowing **righteousness** for one day. Stick with sowing in righteousness, you will **reap in mercy** in due time.

3. (13-15) God tells Israel the terrible result of resisting Him.

**You have plowed wickedness;
You have reaped iniquity.
You have eaten the fruit of lies,
Because you trusted in your own way,
In the multitude of your mighty men.
Therefore tumult shall arise among your people,
And all your fortresses shall be plundered
As Shalman plundered Beth Arbel in the day of battle—
A mother dashed in pieces upon *her* children.
Thus it shall be done to you, O Bethel,
Because of your great wickedness.
At dawn the king of Israel
Shall be cut off utterly.**

a. **Because you trusted in your own way:** This is the essence of all sin. We trust in our **own way** instead of in God’s way. Ruin always comes when we trust in our **own way** instead of God’s way, and that ruin was about to come upon Israel.

The Lord's Love for Israel

Hos 11:1 The LORD says, "When Israel was a child, I loved him and called him out of Egypt as my son.

Hos 11:2 But the more I called to him, the more he turned away from me. My people sacrificed to Baal; they burned incense to idols.

Hos 11:3 Yet I was the one who taught Israel to walk. I took my people up in my arms, but they did not acknowledge that I took care of them.

Hos 11:4 I drew them to me with affection and love. I picked them up and held them to my cheek; I bent down to them and fed them.

Hos 11:5 "They refuse to return to me, and so they must return to Egypt, and Assyria will rule them.

Hos 11:6 War will sweep through their cities and break down the city gates. It will destroy my people because they do what they themselves think best.

Hos 11:7 They insist on turning away from me. They will cry out because of the yoke that is on them, but no one will lift it from them.

Hos 11:8 "How can I give you up, Israel? How can I abandon you? Could I ever destroy you as I did Admah, or treat you as I did Zeboiim? My heart will not let me do it! My love for you is too strong.

Hos 11:9 I will not punish you in my anger; I will not destroy Israel again. For I am God and not a mere human being. I, the Holy One, am with you. I will not come to you in anger.

Hos 11:10 "My people will follow me when I roar like a lion at their enemies. They will hurry to me from the west.

Hos 11:11 They will come from Egypt, as swiftly as birds, and from Assyria, like doves. I will bring them to their homes again. I, the LORD, have spoken."

Hos 11:12 The LORD says, "The people of Israel have surrounded me with lies and deceit, and the people of Judah are still rebelling against me, the faithful and holy God.

Hosea 11:1-12

Hosea 11 - Drawn with Gentle Cords

A. God's tender love for Israel.

1. (1-2) Israel: Called by God and called by the Baals.

**"When Israel was a child, I loved him,
And out of Egypt I called My son.
As they called them,
So they went from them;
They sacrificed to the Baals,
And burned incense to carved images."**

a. **I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son:**
God remembered His tender love for Israel, when more than 500 years before the time of Hosea He brought them out of **Egypt**.

i. This is an "unexpected" prophecy fulfilled in the life of Jesus. Mat 2:15 shows how the words **out of Egypt I called My son** were fulfilled when the child Jesus return from Egypt after escaping there on the eve of Herod's massacre of the innocents.

b. **As they called them, so they went from them:**
God called Israel out of Egypt, but the idolatry of the Baals called to Israel, and they forsook the LORD and followed the Baals (the local deities of Canaan).

2. (3-4) God's tender love for an unseeing Israel.

**"I taught Ephraim to walk,
Taking them by their arms;
But they did not know that I healed them.
I drew them with gentle cords,**

**With bands of love,
And I was to them as those who take the yoke from
their neck.
I stooped *and* fed them."**

a. **I taught Ephraim to walk... but they did not know that I healed them:** God does so much for His people that they are unaware of. Often we attribute some blessing directly from the hand of God to some other source.

i. **Taking them by their arms:** The picture is of a parent teaching a child how to walk by holding the child's arms and supporting the child as they make their awkward steps.

b. **I drew them with gentle cords, with bands of love:** Even when God draws His people, it is with **gentle cords of love**, not with harsh manipulation or coercion. God wants to win us over, but not with brute force.

i. Clarke on **gentle cords**: "This is a reference to *leading strings*, one end of which is held by the child, the other by the nurse, by which the little one, feeling some support, and gaining confidence, endeavours to walk. God, their heavenly Father, made use of every means and method to teach them to walk in the right and only safe path."

ii. In the ancient world, the empires of Persia and Greece fought bitter wars. There was said to be a great difference between their soldiers. In the Persian army, soldiers were like slaves and driven into battle with whips and threats. In the Greek army, soldiers were free men and patriots, and fought for Sparta and Greece out of love for country and a sense of duty. The smaller armies of Greece usually beat the larger armies of Persia. God calls us as an army of free men, grateful patriots of the kingdom of God.

iii. "Understand, then, it is true that no man comes to God except he is drawn; but it is equally true that God draweth no man contrary to the constitution of man, but his methods of drawing are in strict accordance with ordinary mental operations. He finds the human mind what it is, and he acts upon it, not as upon matter, but as upon mind. The compulsions, the constraints, the cords that he uses, are 'cords of a man.' The bands he employs are 'bands of love.'" (Spurgeon)

c. **As those who take the yoke from their neck:** This refers to relaxing and loosening the yoke-collar of a plowing animal, giving the animal rest and the freedom to breathe.

d. **I stooped and fed them:** God humbled Himself to minister to His needy people. One might almost think it is beneath the dignity and honor of God to stoop so for His people, but He never thinks so. This is the heart reflected in the servant nature of Jesus (Philippians 2).

B. God's strict hand towards Israel.

1. (5-7) *Empty profession brings the chastening of God.*

**"He shall not return to the land of Egypt;
But the Assyrian shall be his king,
Because they refused to repent.
And the sword shall slash in his cities,
Devour his districts,
And consume *them*,
Because of their own counsels.
My people are bent on backsliding from Me.
Though they call to the Most High,
None at all exalt *Him*."**

a. **Because they refused to repent:** In this sense, it wasn't so much the sin of Israel that got them into

trouble. It was their stubborn refusal **to repent** after their sin. For that, God would make sure that destruction and exile waited for them.

b. **My people are bent on backsliding from Me. Though they call to the Most High, none at all exalt Him: Backsliding** means that at one time, Israel had a closer and more real walk with God. Now that is in the past, and their profession is simply empty. They **call to the Most High** in a formal sort of way, but they did not **exalt Him** with their lives.

2. (8-9) *God's sympathy in the midst of chastening.*

**"How can I give you up, Ephraim?
How can I hand you over, Israel?
How can I make you like Admah?
How can I set you like Zeboiim?
My heart churns within Me;
My sympathy is stirred.
I will not execute the fierceness of My anger;
I will not again destroy Ephraim.
For I *am* God, and not man,
The Holy One in your midst;
And I will not come with terror."**

a. **How can I give you up, Ephraim?** Though the dark clouds of judgment are on the horizon, God takes no pleasure in the chastening about to come upon Israel. Instead He says, "**My sympathy is stirred.**"

i. We are in sin, and guilty before God. Yet He says, **How can I give you up?** Justice demands that He do this, yet in His heart He must find a way of salvation. In this, God sends Jesus Christ, and on the cross Jesus was "given up" in our place.

b. **Admah** and **Zeboiim** were two cities near Sodom and Gomorrah that were also destroyed (Deu 29:23). God

says, "I can't bear to allow My people to be caught up in the destruction that will come upon all the nations, as **Admah** and **Zeboiim** were caught up on the destruction that came upon Sodom and Gomorrah."

c. **I will not again destroy Ephraim:** Though their sin deserves it, God will not wipe out Israel. He will leave a remnant, and will restore the nation.

d. **For I am God, and not man:** The longsuffering, forgiveness, and compassion of the Lord toward His people seems unbelievable until we recognize that He is **not man**, but God. His love and forgiveness are of a different order. Charles Spurgeon observed that there are many differences between God and man in the matter of forgiveness.

- Man cannot hold back his anger very long.
- Man cannot bear with others when he is tired, stressed, or annoyed.
- Man will not reconcile if the person who offended him is a person of bad character.
- Man is often only willing to be reconciled if the offending party craves forgiveness and makes the first move.
- Man is often only willing to be reconciled if the offending party will never again do the wrong.
- Man, when he does reconcile, does not lift the former offender to place of high status and partnership.
- Man, when he is wronged, does not bear all the penalty for the wrong done.
- Man, when he attempts reconciliation, will not continue if he is rejected.

- Man will not restore an offender without a period of probation
- Man will not love, adopt, honor, and associate with one who has wronged him.
- Man will not trust someone who has formerly wronged them.

i. What passes for forgiveness among men is nothing like the amazing forgiveness of God. "Suppose that someone had grievously offended any one of you, and that he asked your forgiveness, do you not think that you would probably say to him, 'Well, yes, I forgive you; but I - I - I - cannot forget it'? Ah! dear friends, that is a sort of forgiveness with one leg chopped off, it is a lame forgiveness, and is not worth much" (Spurgeon).

3. (10-12) The roar of God calls Israel back.

"They shall walk after the LORD.

He will roar like a lion.

When He roars,

Then *His* sons shall come trembling from the west;

They shall come trembling like a bird from Egypt,

Like a dove from the land of Assyria.

And I will let them dwell in their houses,"

Says the LORD.

"Ephraim has encircled Me with lies,

And the house of Israel with deceit;

But Judah still walks with God,

Even with the Holy One *who is* faithful."

a. **When He roars, then His sons shall come trembling from the west:** God spoke of the ultimate restoration of Israel, an expression of His mercy to Ephraim.

b. **Ephraim has encircled Me with lies:** God made these promises knowing the present state of Israel. Though Judah was in a better place than Israel, God still made the promises with full knowledge of their present state.

Hos 12:1 Everything that the people of Israel do from morning to night is useless and destructive. Treachery and acts of violence increase among them. They make treaties with Assyria and do business with Egypt."

The Lord's Indictment of Israel and Judah

Hos 12:2 The LORD has an accusation to bring against the people of Judah; he is also going to punish Israel for the way her people act. He will pay them back for what they have done.

Hos 12:3 Their ancestor Jacob struggled with his twin brother Esau while the two of them were still in their mother's womb; when Jacob grew up, he fought against God—

Hos 12:4 he fought against an angel and won. He wept and asked for a blessing. And at Bethel God came to our ancestor Jacob and spoke with him.

Hos 12:5 This was the LORD God Almighty—the LORD is the name by which he is to be worshiped.

Hos 12:6 So now, descendants of Jacob, trust in your God and return to him. Be loyal and just, and wait patiently for your God to act.

Hos 12:7 The LORD says, "The people of Israel are as dishonest as the Canaanites; they love to cheat their customers with false scales.

Hos 12:8 'We are rich,' they say. 'We've made a fortune. And no one can accuse us of getting rich dishonestly.'

Hos 12:9 But I, the LORD your God who led you out of Egypt, I will make you live in tents again, as you did when I

came to you in the desert.

Hos 12:10 "I spoke to the prophets and gave them many visions, and through the prophets I gave my people warnings.

Hos 12:11 Yet idols are worshiped in Gilead, and those who worship them will die. Bulls are sacrificed in Gilgal, and the altars there will become piles of stone in the open fields."

Hos 12:12 Our ancestor Jacob had to flee to Mesopotamia, where, in order to get a wife, he worked for another man and took care of his sheep.

Hos 12:13 The LORD sent a prophet to rescue the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt and to take care of them.

Hos 12:14 The people of Israel have made the LORD bitterly angry; they deserve death for their crimes. Their Lord will punish them for the disgrace they have brought on him.

Hosea 12:1-14

Hosea 12 - Ancient Jacob and Modern Israel

A. The deeply rooted deceit of Israel.

1. (1) Israel trusts in deals and alliances with surrounding nations.

**"Ephraim feeds on the wind,
And pursues the east wind;
He daily increases lies and desolation.
Also they make a covenant with the Assyrians,
And oil is carried to Egypt."**

a. **Ephraim feeds on the wind:** The idols and foreign alliances Israel trusts in are useless. They are like trying to feed **on the wind**.

i. Clarke on the **east wind**: "They are not only empty, but *dangerous* and *destructive*. The *east wind*

was, and still is, in all countries, a *parching, wasting, injurious* wind."

b. **Also they make a covenant with the Assyrians, and oil carried to Egypt:** Instead of trusting in the LORD, Israel trusted in deals and payoffs to the surrounding superpowers. It was foolish for them to think that Assyria or Egypt was more powerful or dependable than the LORD was.

2. (2-6) *Ancient Jacob is an example of Israel's present deceit.*

**"The LORD also *brings* a charge against Judah,
And will punish Jacob according to his ways;
According to his deeds He will recompense him.
He took his brother by the heel in the womb,
And in his strength he struggled with God.
Yes, he struggled with the Angel and prevailed;
He wept, and sought favor from Him.
He found Him *in* Bethel,
And there He spoke to us—
That is, the LORD God of hosts.
The LORD *is* His memorable name.
So you, by *the help* of your God, return;
Observe mercy and justice,
And wait on your God continually."**

a. **He took his brother by the heel in the womb:** Here, God looked back at the patriarch Jacob and how Israel in Hosea's day was just like their forefather Jacob in the days of Genesis. In ancient Israel, a "heel-catcher" was a double-dealer, someone who achieved their goals through crafty and dishonest means. Through Hosea, God said, "That was Jacob then and it is Israel now."

i. "'To grasp the heel' also meant to go behind one's back in order to deceive or trick him, and this became the dominant characteristic of the man." (Boice)

b. **In his strength he struggled with God:** The prophet recalls the struggle between Jacob and the Man of Gen 32:24-30. Jacob refused to submit to God, so God demanded submission from him in a literal wrestling match.

i. **He struggled with God** reinforces a point already made clear in Gen 32:24-30 : Jacob wrestled with the LORD God, who appeared in human form as a Man. Since this was a unique messenger from heaven, He is also appropriately described as an **Angel** of the LORD.

c. **He struggled with the Angel and prevailed; he wept, and sought favor from Him:** Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Hosea emphasized two more details from the Gen 32:24-30 account. First, he told us that Jacob **prevailed** in the wrestling match. Second, he told us that Jacob **wept** in the struggle.

i. It could be said that Jacob **prevailed** in the only way anyone can when they struggle against God. We prevail when we lose and know it, surrendering to God.

ii. It is important to know that Jacob **wept** because it helps us understand how desperate and broken he was as he hung on the LORD, now pleading only for a blessing.

d. **So you, by the help of your God, return:** Jacob came to the place where he knew God had beaten him, and all he could do was hang on to God and plead for a blessing. **So you** speaks to Israel, saying they should return to God the same way.

i. **By the help of your God, return** reminds us that we can never even return to the LORD without His

help. This shows how weak we are and how much we really depend on Him.

B. Judgment promised against a confident Israel.

1. (7-11) *Though Israel is confident in its wealth, God will bring them low.*

"A cunning Canaanite!

Deceitful scales *are* in his hand;

He loves to oppress.

And Ephraim said,

'Surely I have become rich,

I have found wealth for myself;

***In* all my labors**

They shall find in me no iniquity that *is* sin.'

But I *am* the LORD your God,

Ever since the land of Egypt;

I will again make you dwell in tents,

As in the days of the appointed feast.

I have also spoken by the prophets,

And have multiplied visions;

I have given symbols through the witness of the prophets."

Though Gilead *has* idols;

Surely they are vanity;

Though they sacrifice bulls in Gilgal,

Indeed their altars *shall be* heaps in the furrows of the field.

a. **Surely I have become rich:** Hosea prophesied during a time of great prosperity, but spiritual and moral decadence in Israel. When things are good financially, it's hard for people to believe that their society is in trouble (**in all my labors they shall find in me no iniquity that is sin**).

i. **Canaanite** in this context probably means "merchant" because the Canaanites at this time were

well-known merchants and traders. Clarke says, "Ephraim is as corrupt as those heathenish traffickers were."

b. **I will again make you dwell in tents:** Though Israel enjoyed financial prosperity and fine homes, God's judgment would bring them into exile and humble **tents** again. This judgment is certain because God has **spoken by the prophets**, yet they did not listen.

c. **Their altars shall be heaps in the furrows of the field:** Pagan altars were built high and stately to add dignity to the pagan god. When God's judgment comes, all those altars will be brought low, so the only altars will be the hills made by the **furrows of the field**.

2. (12-14) *Reproach will return upon Ephraim.*

**Jacob fled to the country of Syria;
Israel served for a spouse,
And for a wife he tended *sheep*.
By a prophet the LORD brought Israel out of Egypt,
And by a prophet he was preserved.
Ephraim provoked *Him* to anger most bitterly;
Therefore his Lord will leave the guilt of his
bloodshed upon him,
And return his reproach upon him.**

a. **Jacob fled to the country of Syria:** The previous passage brought up the impending exile of Israel, and now Hosea made a connection between the coming exile of Israel and Jacob's own exile when he fled from Esau to his uncle Laban in Syria.

b. **By a prophet he was preserved... therefore the Lord will leave the guilt of his bloodshed upon him:** Though God sent prophets to Israel, they still rejected His word. They **provoked Him to anger most**

bitterly, so God would leave them in their guilt, and **return** the **reproach** of Egypt's slavery upon them.

The Lord's Relentless Judgment on Israel

Hos 13:1 In the past, when the tribe of Ephraim spoke, the other tribes of Israel were afraid; they looked up to Ephraim. But the people sinned by worshiping Baal, and for this they will die.

Hos 13:2 They still keep on sinning by making metal images to worship—idols of silver, designed by human minds, made by human hands. And then they say, "Offer sacrifices to them!" How can anyone kiss those idols—idols in the shape of bulls!

Hos 13:3 And so these people will disappear like morning mist, like the dew that vanishes early in the day. They will be like chaff which the wind blows from the threshing place, like smoke from a chimney.

Hos 13:4 The LORD says, "I am the LORD your God, who led you out of Egypt. You have no God but me. I alone am your savior.

Hos 13:5 I took care of you in a dry, desert land.

Hos 13:6 But when you entered the good land, you became full and satisfied, and then you grew proud and forgot me.

Hos 13:7 So I will attack you like a lion. Like a leopard I will lie in wait along your path.

Hos 13:8 I will attack you like a bear that has lost her cubs, and I will tear you open. Like a lion I will devour you on the spot, and will tear you to pieces like a wild animal.

Hos 13:9 "I will destroy you, people of Israel! Then who can help you?

Hos 13:10 You asked for a king and for leaders, but how can they save the nation?

Hos 13:11 In my anger I have given you kings, and in my fury I have taken them away.

Hos 13:12 "Israel's sin and guilt are on record, and the records are safely stored away.

Hos 13:13 Israel has a chance to live, but is too foolish to take it—like a child about to be born, who refuses to come out of the womb.

Hos 13:14 I will not save this people from the world of the dead or rescue them from the power of death. Bring on your plagues, death! Bring on your destruction, world of the dead! I will no longer have pity for this people.

Hos 13:15 Even though Israel flourishes like weeds, I will send a hot east wind from the desert, and it will dry up their springs and wells. It will take away everything of value.

Hos 13:16 Samaria must be punished for rebelling against me. Her people will die in war; babies will be dashed to the ground, and pregnant women will be ripped open."

Hosea 13:1-16

Hosea 13 - "I Will Be Your King"

A. Two pictures of judgment.

1. (1-3) Sinful Israel will be scattered like the morning clouds.

**When Ephraim spoke, trembling,
He exalted *himself* in Israel;
But when he offended through Baal *worship*, he died.
Now they sin more and more,
And have made for themselves molded images,
Idols of their silver, according to their skill;
All of it *is* the work of craftsmen.
They say of them,
"Let the men who sacrifice kiss the calves!"
Therefore they shall be like the morning cloud
And like the early dew that passes away,**

**Like chaff blown off from a threshing floor
And like smoke from a chimney.**

a. **Now they sin more and more:** God never blessed Israel when they worshipped Baal, but that didn't stop them. They kept after their idolatry **more and more**.

b. **The men who sacrifice:** This may instead have the idea of *engaging in human sacrifice*, and could be translated "the sacrificers of men." In ancient Israel human sacrifice was almost always child-sacrifice. Hosea already spoken of this horrible practice in Hos 9:13 and perhaps in Hos 5:2.

i. "Viewed together, the sin is a total perversion of values. A craftsman's work is elevated to divine status; human beings sacrifice their offspring to a metal object from whose lifeless form they also beg help; persons embrace with adulation the images of the very animals that they use for ploughing, threshing and hauling." (Hubbard)

c. **Therefore they shall be like the morning cloud and like the early dew that passes:** Because Israel trusted in themselves and in idols, they could not *stand*. They would pass like the **early dew**.

2. (4-8) *Sinful Israel will be torn apart as if by a lion.*

**"Yet I am the LORD your God
Ever since the land of Egypt,
And you shall know no God but Me;
For *there is* no Savior besides Me.
I knew you in the wilderness,
In the land of great drought.
When they had pasture, they were filled;
They were filled and their heart was exalted;
Therefore they forgot Me.
So I will be to them like a lion;**

**Like a leopard by the road I will lurk;
I will meet them like a bear deprived of her cubs;
I will tear open their rib cage,
And there I will devour them like a lion.
The wild beast shall tear them."**

a. **Yet I am the LORD your God ever since the land of Egypt:** Israel changed, but the LORD God did not. He was still the only God and the only Savior, and His people would be left desolate when they left Him.

b. **They were filled and their heart was exalted; therefore they forgot Me:** It is a strange and terrible aspect of human nature that when times are good, we often forget the God who blessed us. When times are bad we are often more likely to turn our hearts back to God.

i. At the end of the 20th Century, Americans were in a season of unprecedented prosperity. Yet statistics show that in the 1990s churchgoers gave a smallest percentage of their income in contributions since the Great Depression. Sadly, often when we are **filled**, then we find our hearts **exalted**, and soon we forget God.

c. **So I will be to them like a lion:** When we neglect and affront God as He blesses, we then will often face the chastening hand of God. It isn't because God hates us, but because we have demonstrated that we will only turn to Him when times are bad.

i. "The three mentioned – lion, leopard, and bear – were all native to Palestine and known for their relentless manner of killing prey." (Wood)

B. God, the only hope of Israel.

1. (9-11) *The rejected King and the imposed king.*

**"O Israel, you are destroyed,
But your help *is* from Me.
I will be your King;
Where *is any other*,
That he may save you in all your cities?
And your judges to whom you said,
'Give me a king and princes'?
I gave you a king in My anger,
And took *him* away in My wrath."**

a. **You are destroyed, but your help is from Me:**
Even when Israel felt the sting of God's chastening hand, they could still find **help** from the LORD, if they would only turn to Him.

b. **I will be your King... I gave you a king in My anger, and took him away in My wrath:** God wanted to be recognized as the King of Israel, no matter which man sat on the royal throne. When they rejected the LORD as King, He gave them the kind of kings their hearts wanted and deserved, and then even took those kings as further judgment.

2. (12-16) *The sorrowful judgment of Ephraim and her children.*

**"The iniquity of Ephraim *is* bound up;
His sin *is* stored up.
The sorrows of a woman in childbirth shall come upon him.
He *is* an unwise son,
For he should not stay long where children are born.
I will ransom them from the power of the grave;
I will redeem them from death.
O Death, I will be your plagues!
O Grave, I will be your destruction!
Pity is hidden from My eyes.
Though he is fruitful among *his* brethren,**

**An east wind shall come;
The wind of the LORD shall come up from the wilderness.
Then his spring shall become dry,
And his fountain shall be dried up.
He shall plunder the treasury of every desirable prize.
Samaria is held guilty,
For she has rebelled against her God.
They shall fall by the sword,
Their infants shall be dashed in pieces,
And their women with child ripped open.”**

a. The sorrows of a woman in childbirth shall come upon him: Labor pains often come unexpectedly, are intense, and increase in their pain and duration. In the same way, judgment would come upon Israel.

b. I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: The sin and judgment of Israel were both great, but not greater than God’s ability and power to redeem. He can even **redeem... from death**, so that **death** and the **grave** are mocked as defeated foes.

i. Paul quoted the Septuagint translation of Hos 13:14 in describing our triumph over death in our sharing in the resurrection of Jesus: *O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?* (1Co 15:55)

c. Samaria is held guilty, for she has rebelled against her God: In the long term, Israel will see the glory of God’s redemption and His power over sin and death. In the near term, Israel will be chastened for their rebellion against God.

A Plea to Return to the Lord

Hos 14:1 Return to the LORD your God, people of Israel. Your sin has made you stumble and fall.

Hos 14:2 Return to the LORD, and let this prayer be your offering to him: "Forgive all our sins and accept our prayer, and we will praise you as we have promised.

Hos 14:3 Assyria can never save us, and war horses cannot protect us. We will never again say to our idols that they are our God. O LORD, you show mercy to those who have no one else to turn to."

Hos 14:4 The LORD says, "I will bring my people back to me. I will love them with all my heart; no longer am I angry with them.

Hos 14:5 I will be to the people of Israel like rain in a dry land. They will blossom like flowers; they will be firmly rooted like the trees of Lebanon.

Hos 14:6 They will be alive with new growth, and beautiful like olive trees. They will be fragrant like the cedars of Lebanon.

Hos 14:7 Once again they will live under my protection. They will grow crops of grain and be fruitful like a vineyard. They will be as famous as the wine of Lebanon.

Hos 14:8 The people of Israel will have nothing more to do with idols; I will answer their prayers and take care of them. Like an evergreen tree I will shelter them; I am the source of all their blessings."

Hos 14:9 May those who are wise understand what is written here, and may they take it to heart. The LORD's ways are right, and righteous people live by following them, but sinners stumble and fall because they ignore them.

Hosea 14:1-9

Hosea 14 - Real Wisdom Turns Israel back to the LORD

"This is a wonderful chapter to be at the end of such a book. I had never expected from such a prickly shrub to gather so fair a flower, so sweet a fruit; but so it is: where sin abounded, grace doth much more abound. No chapter in the Bible can be more rich in mercy than this last of Hosea; and yet no chapter in the Bible might, in the natural order of things, have been more terrible in judgment. Where we looked for the blackness of darkness, behold a noontide of light!" (Charles Spurgeon)

A. Israel's repentance and God's response.

1. (1-3) *What Israel should say in their repentance.*

**O Israel, return to the LORD your God,
For you have stumbled because of your iniquity;
Take words with you,
And return to the LORD.
Say to Him,
"Take away all iniquity;
Receive *us* graciously,
For we will offer the sacrifices of our lips.
Assyria shall not save us,
We will not ride on horses,
Nor will we say anymore to the work of our hands,
'*You are our gods.*'
For in You the fatherless finds mercy."**

a. **Take words with you, and return to the LORD:** In returning to the LORD, Israel must come on God's terms, not their own. God says, "When you return to Me, **take words with you**. I want you to return to Me not with a silent feeling in your heart, but with proper words of repentance and trust in Me."

i. When we come before the LORD, it is essential to **take words with you**. There is a place for sharing the inarticulate feelings of the heart with God, but that is not the essence of fellowship and prayer with

Him. The worship of God is intelligent, and God made us able to communicate ideas and feelings with words. It isn't enough to sit before the LORD and feel love towards Him. Instead, **take words with you** – *tell God that you love Him*. It isn't enough to feel repentance before the LORD. Instead, **take words with you** and *tell God you repent before Him*.

ii. This is the same idea that Paul expressed in Rom 10:8-10 : *But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.* God commands us to communicate with Him in **words**, not only ideas or feelings.

iii. What words do we take with us? The best words are the words God gives us in His Word. When we communicate to God in the words and ideas of Scripture, we find an articulate and effective voice before God.

b. Take away all iniquity; receive us graciously:

When we return to the LORD, taking words with us, we must first come humbly. We recognize our sin and our total dependence on the grace of God.

c. For we will offer the sacrifices of our lips:

Literally, Hos 14:2 says *for we will offer the calves of our lips*. Since bull calves were often brought for sacrifice, the translators felt justified in putting it **for we will offer the sacrifices of our lips**. However, the more literal rendering shows just how plainly our words

of praise, worship, confession, petition, or intercession can be a sacrifice before God.

d. **Assyria shall not save us, we will not ride on horses, nor will we say anymore to the work of our hands, "You are our gods":** When we return to the LORD, taking words with us, we come renouncing our dependence on all other things. We recognize that the LORD and the LORD alone can make the difference in our life.

e. **For in You the fatherless finds mercy:** When we return to the LORD, taking words with us, we come declaring His greatness. We tell of what a great and merciful God we have.

2. (4-7) *God promises to restore a repentant Israel.*

**"I will heal their backsliding,
I will love them freely,
For My anger has turned away from him.
I will be like the dew to Israel;
He shall grow like the lily,
And lengthen his roots like Lebanon.
His branches shall spread;
His beauty shall be like an olive tree,
And his fragrance like Lebanon.
Those who dwell under his shadow shall return;
They shall be revived *like* grain,
And grow like a vine.
Their scent *shall be* like the wine of Lebanon."**

a. **I will heal their backsliding:** God saw that Israel was bent on backsliding from Him (Hos 11:7), but He promised to heal the backsliding of a repentant Israel. He did it not because Israel would deserve it, but because it is in His nature to **love them freely**.

i. The word is *compassionate*: **I will heal their backsliding**. This shows God looks on our **backsliding** more like a *disease* than a *crime*. He does not say, "I will pardon their backsliding." It is "as though he said, 'My poor people, I do remember that they are but dust; they are liable to a thousand temptations through the fall, and they soon go astray; but I will not treat them as though they were rebels, I will look upon them as patients, and they shall look upon me as a physician.'" (Spurgeon).

ii. The word is certain: **I will heal their backsliding**. Not "I might heal" or "I could heal" or "I can try to heal," but **I will heal their backsliding**. Come to God for healing of your backsliding, and He **will** do it! God is too great a physician to allow any patient to leave His office without being healed.

iii. The word is *personal*: **I will heal their backsliding**. He speaks to His people, and addresses them personally. We have to come to the Great Physician and say, "Heal *my* backsliding. I want to be the '**their**.'" To get the healing, you have to count yourself among the backsliders.

iv. Are you backsliding? The signs may not be so obvious to others. When you see a tree broken over in a windstorm, it's easy to think that it was the wind. If you look closer, you will often see that insects have been at work a long time on the tree, making it weaker and weaker. It really wasn't the wind that did it – other trees around it withstood the wind. It was the slow decline of strength, as insects nibbled away month after month.

b. This passage shows us what is restored when we return to the LORD.

- Growth is restored (**He shall grow**).

- Beauty is restored (**He shall grow like the lily**).
- Strength is restored (**lengthen his roots like Lebanon**).
- Value is restored (**His beauty shall be like an olive tree**).
- Delight is restored (**His fragrance like Lebanon**).
- Abundance is restored (**revived like grain... grow like the vine... scent shall be like the wine of Lebanon**).

c. **His branches will spread:** When God restores Israel, His people will be a blessing to others, not blessed only unto himself.

B. A new Israel.

1. (8) *Renewed Israel is free from idols.*

“Ephraim shall say,

‘What have I to do anymore with idols?’

I have heard and observed him.

I am like a green cypress tree;

Your fruit is found in Me.”

a. **What have I to do anymore with idols?** When God’s people are healed from backsliding, they focus on the LORD Himself and not on any kind of idol.

b. **Your fruit is found in Me:** At one time, Israel thought they might find fruit in themselves or in the idols of the nations. Now, healed of their backsliding, they find their fruit only in God.

i. **Your fruit is found in Me** can have two ideas, equally true. First, we find the fruit to nourish our soul in God, and God alone. Second, we find the fruit that we are to bear unto the world in God, and God alone.

2. (9) *Renewed Israel walks in wisdom.*

Who is wise?

Let him understand these things.

Who is prudent?

Let him know them.

For the ways of the LORD are right;

The righteous walk in them,

But transgressors stumble in them.

a. **Who is wise?** The wise man will see the message throughout the Book of Hosea. He will understand that in His mercy, God offers a wonderful opportunity for repentance and restoration, and it is dangerous and foolish to neglect that invitation.

b. **The ways of the LORD are right:** Even in the midst of promised judgment, the wise and understanding man sees that **the ways of the LORD are right**, and that every announcement of judgment is an invitation to repentance.

i. "In beauty of expression these final words of Hosea rank with the memorable chapters of the OT. Like the rainbow after a storm, they promise Israel's final restoration. Here is the full flowering of God's unfailing love for his faithless people, the triumph of his grace, the assurance of his healing - all described in imagery that reveals the loving heart of God."
(Wood)